

# *The Thrill Book*

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*Semi-Monthly*

JULY 1, 1919

Vol. II—No. 1



## THE OPIUM SHIP *by* H. Bedford-Jones

Other Contributors:—  
L.J. Beeston, Tod Robbins,  
Nina Wilcox Putnam, J.U. Giesy,  
Robert W. Sneddon and others

*Sidney H. Bassett*

# THE THRILL BOOK

== SEMIMONTHLY ==

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# The Thrill Book

## Our July Fifteenth Number

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**M**URRAY LEINSTER has exceeded his usual mastery of fiction in a novelette we are going to give you in our next number. It is called "A THOUSAND DEGREES BELOW ZERO." Imagine an enemy of the human race . . . a great scientist who understands all natural laws and who shrewdly conceives a plan by which he can tie up the traffic of every harbor in the world; closes the Panama Canal; destroys his enemies one by one; terrorizing the entire civilized world, and defeats all attempts to destroy him. We can easily say that it is the best thing of its kind that has come to our hands. Not only does the author understand the telling of a fascinating story, but he has made a lifelong study of science. Suppose you were walking along the wharf, and suddenly you saw a monster iceberg floating down the Hudson River, a column of hot steam arising from the center, and as it moved along, causing complete destruction of everything in its way. What would you do? In this amazing novelette, Murray Leinster has created the best example of pseudo-scientific fiction that has yet appeared in *THE THRILL BOOK*. This is the kind of story that you can't find in any other magazine now published in America. What appealed to us was the absorbing interest that holds the reader from the first line to the last. Here is an author whom it will pay you to watch. Confidentially, we may as well admit that we are going to follow this novelette up in a few issues with another story dealing with an entirely different situation, but with the same astounding and fantastic background. We advise you to order the next issue of *THE THRILL BOOK* from your newsdealer at once.

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Be sure and begin the new serial in this issue by H. Bedford-Jones. "THE OPIUM SHIP" is a swiftly moving, dramatic yarn. This author is likewise a new acquisition on the staff of *THE THRILL BOOK*. His work has been appearing regularly in another large periodical, but, following our usual policy of not allowing anything to stand in the way of our getting the best on the market, no matter what it costs, or the amount of time it takes, we went out after H. Bedford-Jones, made him an offer that he couldn't refuse . . . the result, a crackjack serial, and later on a novelette that should make the Tired Reader sit up and grip his chair.

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May Freud Dickenson, a writer at present living in India, has sent us a bit of fiction called "THE MATE," which is particularly interesting to those who care for stories dealing with the mysterious and never-to-be-explained East. It has a surprise at the end utterly unlike any other thing of its kind.

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Don Mark Lemon and Clyde Broadwell both have examples of their work in the July Fifteenth issue. The former calls his striking story "THE WHISPERING FROM THE GROUND." The latter contributes the first of a series called "TALES OF THE DOUBLE MAN," "BACK TO EARTH," by R. R. Baker, and "ROOM 13," by Will S. Gidley, are stories by unknown writers. It is the policy of *THE THRILL BOOK* to stand behind any out-of-the-rut story that comes along, no matter who writes it or where it is written. "THE PONTIARD OF CHARLOTTE CORDAY," by Francois de Vallient, contains a unique situation.

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In the July Fifteenth issue the serial by John R. Coryell comes to an end. "STRASBOURG ROSE" has earned a great deal of praise. If you haven't started it, do so now. We will be glad to send you the two back numbers if you desire them. Upon receipt of twenty cents in stamps we will mail the June First and Fifteenth numbers, so that you can enjoy reading this refreshing tale from the very beginning.

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If you get *THE THRILL BOOK* twice a month at your newsdealer we are content, but if you don't, we advise you to subscribe at once, so you will not miss the type of fiction that you will be unable to read anywhere else. The subscription rate is \$3.00 per year in the United States; \$4.32 in Canada; \$5.04 foreign. Let us hear from you right away.

# The Thrill Book

Semi-Monthly

Vol. II

JULY 1, 1919

No. 1

## The Opium Ship

By  
H. Bedford-Jones



### CHAPTER I.

#### THE FIDDLER.

SIR Gerald Fitzjohn de Courcy Desmond, K. O. M. G., D. S. O., late flight commander in that section of his majesty's Royal Flying Corps operating in Papuan waters, was dead broke and knew it. What was more to the point, he was drunk and did not know it.

This surprising, even tragic, event, happened in Manila. Gerald Desmond had been in the city a week, upon his way home, without taking a drink; he was not what is termed a drinking man. Drinking men do not succeed in naval hydroplane work, at least to the extent of winning honors.

But, upon this amazing afternoon, while Gerald Desmond was playing bridge at the English Club, in the Paco section of town, he had received a cablegram. This cable message informed him that his uncle's fortune had departed; that his uncle, a worthy baronet of manufacturing fame in Dublin, had departed on the heels of the fortune; and that he, Gerald Desmond, was now a baronet without an income. He had resigned his commission when the war ended, and had now neither job nor money.

Having settled his bridge score, he found fifty dollars in his pocket, and of this he devoted the major portion to the bar. Thus, at nine-ten upon that historic evening, he wandered to



the cloakroom, pursued by a waiter with a forgotten drink.

"Sure, I'll take it," said Desmond, smiling brightly when the waiter gained his attention. "Here's good luck to ye, lad, and many tips. Will ye have a bit drink yourself, now?"

The respectable China boy refused, with a blank stare.

Desmond allowed the attendant to help him into his overcoat; it was a chilly night. A plain black scarf covered his neckwear and white shirt front. A black crush hat concealed his awkwardly red hair. An ebony stick fell over his arm.

"Will I call a cab, sir?" asked the attendant delicately. "Or a taxi?"

"Ye will not," said Desmond, shocked. "Would you insinuate that I cannot walk?"

He left the attendant coughing apologetically, and made his way to the street. He was in a happy inward glow and did not feel a bit sorry for himself. Indeed, he felt rather rejoiced over the knowledge that he could follow a crack in the sidewalk with perfect accuracy and aplomb.

"Thunder o' Finn!" he exclaimed joyously. "There's somethin' in havin' Irish blood, after all—to say nothin' of havin' a brewer for an uncle, rest his soul!"

He directed his steps toward the Manila Hotel, which lies just beyond the Luneta, but the fresh night air gave him such an insidiously false idea of his condition that he changed his direction with the idea of getting a drink at the Elks' or the Army and Navy. So he struck off down Calle Isaac Peral, but by the time he had passed the Cathedral he began to observe that there was something subtly and decidedly wrong with the sidewalk. Still he forged ahead, only to come to a halt when he reached the Del Pilar tramway line. There he leaned on his stick with patient resignation.

Presently he became aware that some one was accosting him, hat in hand. With something of an effort, Desmond forced himself into coherent observation. The man had a violin case under his arm, and a wild tangle of black locks fell about his ears at odd angles; his face was pinched, his eyes very bright and sharp and erratic.

"It's a fine gentleman ye are, sir," was saying the man in an admiring tone. "And a musician, as I can see by the face of you with me eyes shut. Now, then, would ye be refusing a brother musician, as one gentleman to another, a bit matter of a loan? Ye would not, as I can see plainly."

"Eh?" demanded Desmond. "What's your name?"

"My name, is it? Well, now, I'll be tellin' ye in confidence, between gentlemen, sir, that it's from a great line I come! It is that, sir, though ye might not believe it to be lookin' at me here. Michael Terence O'Sullivan, by your leave, sir——"

"Aye," said Desmond. "That would be the O'Sullivan Beare, now! 'Twas a great man he was and no mistake; but, my lad, if it's comparing him to the Geraldines——"

"Lord save us!" cried O'Sullivan, starting back. "You're from the old country?"

"I'm not sure," said Desmond candidly. "I'm sure of nothing. Somethin' happened in these parts since this afternoon; an earthquake, likely. Six times have I had the notion of crossin' the street, and each time there'd come a rattling tram threatening to run the life out o' me if I budged. Thunder o' Finn! And look at the sidewalk, with the roll to it!"

"Sure, now I'll be taking ye home," said the fiddler insinuatingly. "Then we'll speak o' that bit loan on the way to——"

"Loan, is it?" repeated Desmond. "Heaven help ye, lad! It's no loan

ye'll get from me. For so long as me credit is good I'll buy ye a drink or two——"

"A fine gentleman like you, broke?" gasped O'Sullivan.

"Divil take it, am I to blame if me uncle left me not a shilling?" demanded Desmond with indignation. "But wait! Give me your arm, O'Sullivan Beare, like a good lad, and leave it to me. Is that the band I hear playin' over beyond at Luneta Park?"

"It is," returned the other bitterly. "And who'll give a dime to hear O'Sullivan fiddle, when the band is playin'? They drowned me out, for a fact; drowned me out, they did——"

"An insult!" declared Desmond with severity. "Your arm, me lad! Now hush. Not a word out of ye—not a word! Insult the O'Sullivan Beare, will they? A little brown constab-stabulary band insult the O'Sullivan, and me standing by? Never! N-never! Sir Gerald Fitzjohn de Courcy Desmond will never——"

"Holy Mother!" gasped the fiddler. "Sure, I thought the fine face of ye looked familiar; 'twas pictured in all the papers! But, sir, don't be interferin' with the crowd now; let me be takin' you toward——"

Desmond gripped the man's arm firmly. "Not a word!" he said. "Hush your blather or I'll smash that fiddle over your head! Guide me straight now, and mind none o' those lamp-posts swing at ye as we pass."

The Luneta was crowded that evening, as usual. The constabulary band was playing from the stand, and along the oval strolled officers and ladies, business men and their families, bowing señors and mantillaed señoritas; brown and white of all degrees made up the gay throng, while the sea breezes lifted the band music in drifting waves across the chatter of tongues.

On the outskirts of the crowd two men occupied a bench, and they were

a strange couple. One was a native dressed in the most impeccable evening attire from silk hat to patent leathers; the pearl studs in his shirt were eloquent of wealth. The other man was roughly dressed and was dour of aspect. He pulled on a clay pipe as he talked, and his smooth-shaven features were stern and sour. There was nothing weak about them.

"I tell you, Señor Arevalo," said this second man, "that I'm done with it, understand? I'll never run in another load o' dope for you nor any other man alive. Otherwise, I'm willin' to oblige. But if ye bring one card aboard I'll throw ye over the side."

The Filipino laughed. One guessed at suave strength in his brown, finely chiseled face; one imagined an inward man of steel, finely tempered, like the gold-inlaid steel of the Moros.

"My dear captain," he said, "I assure you that I shall not smuggle. All I desire is to be taken as a passenger on this trip. Let us be frank! I know that you hesitate because you are to take your owner and his daughter down to Remedios plantation; well, then, I shall not even be seen by them. I have business on the island there, and since you're sailing to-night it will help me immensely to get off at once. That is all."

"All right," said the captain, as though impelled against his better judgment. "For old times' sake, then. You'd best have your dunnage aboard by midnight, for we'll sail on the turn o' the tide. I'll have to pick up a couple o' men before then, too."

"Natives?" queried the other, rising. A hint of eagerness was in his voice.

"No. I want white men, and Lord knows where I'll get 'em! If it were the old days, now, all fine and good; but with this law an' order a man never knows what's what."

The Filipino laughed softly and disappeared in the crowd. The captain

leaned back, sucking at his pipe and watching the band stand. So it happened that he witnessed a most extraordinary thing.

The bandmaster came to the front of the stand and held up his hand until the crowd fell silent through curiosity.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he announced, "Sir Gerald Desmond, of the Royal Flying Corps, has asked to make an announcement regarding a hitherto unknown atrocity of the late war which has come under his observation. I am sure you will all be very glad to hear from so distinguished a gentleman; one who has achieved great fame as an aviator and whose name will be known to many of you."

As the bandmaster ceased and bowed, the crowd broke into instant applause. Coming to the front of the platform was Desmond. It was observed that he had removed hat and coat, and that he held a second man firmly by the arm. It was also observed that the members of the band seemed fully as puzzled as every one else.

When Desmond bowed, and his flashing smile lighted his aggressive, finely carved features, the applause redoubled. It died down when he raised his hand.

"My friends," his rich voice carried clearly to the staring throng below, "this is one of the happiest moments of me life, I assure you 'tis so! On this momentous evening it has fallen to me to make right a great wrong that has been done to one of the finest gentlemen under God's creation, it has that!"

The charming informality of this address was such that a vague suspicion was impressed upon his auditors; but Desmond recaptured them with his smile, and continued.

"Here beside me," and he jerked forward the rather abashed fiddler, "ye behold a victim, an Irishman like myself, an artist of the first water! It's the truth I'm telling you, so listen now.

O'Sullivan Beare is the name of him, and any Irishman present will recall the glorious life an' death of that grand gentleman, who has been playin' the fiddle all this while in your midst, only to be drowned miserably night after night by the glorious discords of this constab-stabulary band, by whose leave I'm addressing you."

Desmond paused for breath. The rising storm of laughter died instantly as he proceeded.

"My friends, for the sake o' fair play, I'm asking you one and all to stand by and see no interference done while this gentleman entertains us. It's a strugglin' member of an oppressed race he is, and when ye consider the jealousy which has led the constab-stabulary band to be drownin' him out night after night, while his unhappy country is starvin' for the ha'pence and dimes which he should be sendin' home to help beat the kaiser and establish democracy in the land of Erin—well, it's all true, anyhow. I have every respect for the Stars an' Shtripes; in fact, I'm intendin' to become an American citizen now that me uncle is dead and me without a shilling to me name, but I will——"

Desmond turned indignantly to his companion. "Why the devil don't ye play? D'ye expect me to stand here blathering all night until ye get tuned up? Play, ye devil! Play, or I'll smash that fiddle——"

At this point the scandalized bandmaster touched Desmond's elbow. What he said was lost in the roars of mirth that swept over the Luneta. The situation was perfectly clear to every one by this time, yet so cool and easy was Desmond that to imagine him drunk——

When the bandmaster was through speaking, Desmond took the conductor's baton from under his arm, lifted the uniformed gentleman by the collar, and with one hand dropped him over the

edge of the stand. Then he turned to the bandsmen.

"Now, ye brown divils! Strike up the 'Wearin' of the Green,' and mind ye follow this baton or I'll murder ye! When me friend here gets into tune, see that ye don't drown him out. Thunder o' Finn! Are ye goin' to play or not?"

The constabulary band banished its grins and seized its instruments. The Luneta was a shrieking, howling mass of joyous humanity, through which the constabulary officers tried vainly to reach the band stand. And then the band started playing.

Michael Terence O'Sullivan began to enter into the spirit of the occasion. He whipped out fiddle and bow, and with a wild grin on his pinched face fell to scraping away; the brown musicians, such of them as could play for laughing, answered Desmond's baton with a *pianissimo*, and for one intoxicating moment O'Sullivan was at the *apogee* of his ambition.

An instant later a flushed and panting constabulary officer appeared beside Desmond. The latter turned to him, knocked him over the edge of the stand after the conductor, and calmly continued waving his baton. This was too much. The law had been insulted, and the law demanded its victim. After all, the bandsmen were constabulary.

O'Sullivan saw the coming storm. He hastily stowed away his fiddle, tucked the case under his arm, and tried to escape; but, caught in the tide of bandsmen, he stood back to back with Desmond and fought valiantly. The end, of course, would never have been in doubt had not some kindly soul switched off the lights which flooded the band stand.

There was a riot in the Luneta that night—a riot which became historic. Gerald Desmond was not at all certain of what happened, although he remembered events fairly well up to the mo-

ment of concluding his speech. It was certain that when he reached the outskirts of the milling mob he was still hanging to Michael Terence O'Sullivan; and the fiddler, who had received a tap over the head from a bassoon and who was only half conscious, still clung to his beloved fiddle.

"It's a most successful evening," observed Desmond vaguely, pausing for breath. "Now, what the devil went with my collar? Upon me soul, I do believe I had a drink too many——"

A dark figure materialized at his elbow.

"Come on, Desmond!" said a voice. "Here's a cab waiting for you."

"Good!" responded Sir Desmond. "Though ye'll have to lend us your arm, for this man hangin' to me disturbs the street most amazingly. Either he's drunk, or I am——"

A powerful hand gripped his arm and steadied him forward. A brown constabulary officer came shrieking up to them, but the unseen protector met him with a blow that sent him under a heap of shrubbery.

"Hurry along with you!" growled the unknown.

Sir Gerald Desmond felt himself bundled into a cab, falling in a heap over the protesting Michael Terence and the fiddle case. After this all grew dim.

Order came gradually out of that historic chaos, and the authorities combed the city for Gerald Desmond, who was now a baronet; the Manila Hotel disclaimed all knowledge of him. The fiddler O'Sullivan, a licensed beggar who had once been honorably discharged from the army by reason of tuberculosis, had likewise failed to turn up at his lodgings.

The two men had completely vanished, and naturally no one connected this disappearance with the fact that the inter-island trading schooner *Sam*

*Gregorio* had left her berth at the Muelle shortly after midnight, bound for her owner's plantation on Mindoro Island.

Upon the following day was raging the worst typhoon which had struck the islands in years. An inbound Singapore steamer reported that she had sighted a schooner off Lubang, running west before the gale; at the end of a week the *San Gregorio* was accounted lost. The loss occasioned some comment, for aboard the schooner had been her owner, the wealthy Don Gregorio Salcedo y Montes, and his daughter, Doña Juliana. The presumed widow of Don Gregorio was prostrated by the event.

It was remarked by the authorities that about this time disappeared one Señor Juan Arevalo—somewhat to their relief. Arevalo was a native of great ability, a member of the legislature from Cavite, who had made much money in devious ways. The consumption of opium fell off noticeably after his disappearance, and he left no family to mourn him. So, taken all in all, the authorities were very glad that he had vanished.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SCHOONER.

THE agonies of Gerald Desmond's awakening to reality were harrowing, but need be lightly dwelt upon. They had much to do with the filthy forecabin of the *San Gregorio*; with violent seasickness; with huge cockroaches; with brief but tender ministrations from a pinched-faced little man with a hacking cough; and with a terrific visitation from no less a person than Captain Miles Canaughan.

"When I need all hands, I need em," concluded the skipper caustically. "But I'm makin' some allowance for your condition, my man. So ye have until eight bells to pull up; if you're not on

deck at four o'clock by your wrist watch, Gawd help ye!"

Desmond merely groaned and collapsed in a throes of nausea. Captain Canaughan punctuated his remarks, unwisely, with two hearty kicks in the ribs.

"I pulled you out o' trouble," he finished, "so don't try no shanghai talk to me. I know ye're a gentleman, and I mean to make ye work; it's my guess that you're a papistical south of Ireland man, for which I've no love. So, then, mind your eye!"

By six bells in the afternoon, Desmond knew all there was to know about his situation. The crew numbered six, all of them ruffians white men, none of them Americans. Lying white and weak in his bunk, Desmond heard two of them talking; they had slid below to swallow pannikins of hot coffee in comparative peace.

There was only one mate to the little schooner—a half-caste—famous for his brawn and his knowledge of the islands. Little O'Sullivan was being badly mauled above decks, and the men laughed at mention of the fiddler. Desmond writhed in his bunk as the talk reached him, and cursed his own helpless plight. He was clad in the remnants of his evening attire.

A little time thereafter, Michael Terence O'Sullivan slipped down into the empty forecabin with two mugs of boiling coffee. He forced one of them on Desmond. The fiddler was blue with cold, and there was a purpling bruise across his cheek.

"Lord help you!" he observed between coughs, dragging his ragged coat about his throat. "Bitter cold outside it is; you in the skipper's watch, me in the mate's. Blowin' the guts out o' hell, sir; just that!"

Desmond sipped at the steaming fluid, which gave him warmth and life.

"What are you coughing for, O'Sullivan?" he asked suddenly.

"T. B., sir," responded the fiddler with a sharp look. "That's how I come to be stranded in the islands, worse luck! Discharged from the army, I was."

"And what the devil are we going to do, aboard this bloody-minded craft?"

"We might do worse than take charge of her ourselves," and the fiddler laughed with a touch of impudent deviltry. "There's a lady aft, they say, and a couple o' fine brown gentlemen. But it's seasick ye are, sir, and seasick ye'll stay for three days——"

"Not I," returned Desmond. "Divil a bit was I ever seasick in me life, lad; it's the smells and last night's liquor. Listen, now! How did ye come aboard here? If I remember right, you weren't drunk last night."

"Somebody had to be lookin' afther you," was the response. "Besides, there was the po-lice back yonder——"

"You, O'Sullivan!" roared a billowing, thunderous voice from the hatchway. "Come out o' that, you rat! *Sangre de Dios*, I'll show you something!"

The fiddler made an abrupt dive for his bunk, in which by some miracle his fiddle case still reposed. Feverishly he snapped open the case and slipped something out of it, then turned as the giant bulk of the mate filled the ladder.

"Leave me alone now!" he cried out shrilly. "It's warnin' ye I am."

Gerald Desmond staggered to his feet and stood, clinging to a bunk, before the mate. A brutal dog was this half-caste, hulking and broad-lipped, who looked at Desmond with the glimmerings of Asian cruelty in his eyes.

"So it's the fine gentleman!" he laughed. "On deck with you!"

"I'm going," said Desmond, reeling a little. "But, me man, you're to leave this lad alone, understand? He's a sick man——"

"On deck, and mind your own busi-

ness!" roared the mate furiously. "I'll kill the dirty dog before I'm through with——"

Desmond forced a blow. Weak as he was, he managed to get himself behind it, and the mate reeled. Then, with a startled oath, the mate swept out his hands and sent Desmond hurtling, head first, into a corner with a crash.

An instant later little O'Sullivan threw up his arm, and the explosion of a pistol filled the forecabin with reeking fumes. The mate, shot squarely between the eyes, lumped himself at the foot of the ladder, a great, dead hulk of flesh.

"There's more'n one way of fighting," shrieked O'Sullivan, with a wild laugh.

Desmond rose and wiped blood from his lips. He wasted no time in recriminations or questions; he lashed his sick brain into energy, and faced facts.

The mate was dead. Who, then, was on deck? Not the skipper; the skipper would take charge at eight bells—in less than half an hour. Then why not seize the ship, as the fiddler had suggested?

A laugh reeled from Desmond's lips as he faced the defiant O'Sullivan.

"Well, it's done, me lad; now to pay the piper! Have ye another o' those popguns?" He indicated the cheap little revolver, so small that O'Sullivan's hand almost concealed it. "I've not much use for a gun ordinarily, but at the present moment I'll admit that——"

"He has one in his coat pocket; he did be smashin' me with the butt," cried the fiddler, pointing at the dead man. "What will you be doin', sir? It's a hangin' job for me now——"

"For both of us, I'm thinkin'," said Desmond coolly. He stooped over the mate, and rose with a brutal automatic in his hand. "Who's going to do the hanging, eh? That's the question. Now, O'Sullivan, if I had a bit of a drink it might put life into me——ah!

Thunder o' Finn, it's a magic fiddle ye have there!"

With a grin, O'Sullivan plunged again for his fiddle case, and presently held up a small flask. Desmond took it and drank.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, returning the flask. "This was a case of necessity, lad!"

"And what was last night, then?" queried the other whimsically.

"A case o' damn foolishness." Desmond's smile was shadowy, though cheering. "Now, let's go. Ye may have to lend me a hand on deck, but I think I can weather it. The skipper's aft?"

"Aye." O'Sullivan was eager, wistfully marveling. "You're goin' for him?"

"Just that." Desmond indicated the body of the mate. "It's hit or be hit, me friend, after this. Make no mistake! We have to hit every mortal head that shows aft; never mind the poor devils for'ard——"

"Will you be waiting, now, a minute?" O'Sullivan caught Desmond's arm, a quick struggle in his pinched features. "I shot him without thinkin', sir, but when it comes to goin' against them aft, and the lady an' all, why I don't——"

Desmond comprehended, and, with a sudden wild laugh, clapped the little man on the shoulder.

"Oh, it's a murdering divil ye thought me, eh? Well, O'Sullivan, or, rather, Michael Terence, I've never planned to kill a man in me life, so have no fears. And as for the lady, God bless her sweet face, we'll take good care of her. Come along with you, before the whisky dies out o' me and the nausea comes back. I think the clean air will blow me fine an' strong again."

He stepped over the mate's body and went up the ladder. At the deck, he paused, aghast; partly through a gust

of weakness that smote him and partly at the sight which met his eyes.

The little schooner, under a scant rag of storm sail, was boring into the western sky. Down upon her out of the south and east was pouring the hurricane—such a storm of wind and rain as almost blew the waves flat, suppressed them into an oily scum of froth and whirling waters, hurled the tiny craft as though from some giant hand. Soon enough the rain would cease, the sea would rise, and the battle begin, but for the moment was comparative respite.

Desmond clawed his way aft along the starboard rail. Three or four of the crew were visible, flattened out in sheltered corners; these eyed him curiously, yet without menace. Behind him followed O'Sullivan, long black locks blowing in the wind. As he progressed, Desmond noted that the schooner was no dirty little island trader, but well appointed. The whaleboats were new and well found. At the galley door the face of a Chinaman appeared for an instant, and almost caused Desmond to halt, for it was the straight-eyed face of a Manchu, and no son of Han.

They were at the after companion now. A single figure stood at the wheel in the stern—a wild, giant statue of a man, locked against the spokes by the following wind. The hatches were ready to be clapped on when it became necessary. With a last glance at the storm wrack in the sky, Desmond fought his way to the ladder and plunged down into peace and obscurity. A moment later the fiddler, panting hard, joined him.

The two men advanced, ignorant where they were to find their prey. As they hesitated, however, a door opened, and the figure of a man lurched out in front of them and pounded at another door.

"Cap'n!" it called. "Oh, cap'n! You'd better open up and——"



Desmond leaned forward, and his arm swept out the automatic butt first. The man dropped without a word; a swarthy, lean, excellently dressed man.

"It ain't the lady's father, anyhow," said O'Sullivan, clawing at the figure. "I seen him with her last night. This one, now——"

He produced an automatic, nodded as though satisfied, and awaited instructions.

Desmond tried the skipper's door, found it locked. He rapped sharply.

"Who's there?" sounded the skipper's harsh tones. "Four bells, eh?"

"Four bells, sir," responded the fiddler, with a wink to Desmond.

The door opened with a jerk. Desmond stepped in, and his automatic lay under the nose of Captain Canaughan.

"Back and sit down, you!" he commanded simply.

"For the love o' Heaven!" growled the amazed and disgruntled skipper, falling back. "If it ain't the popish lad——"

"Papist yerself!" came the fiddler's whining snarl from behind Desmond. "It's an honest Orangeman I am, but with no love for a Belfast scut like yerself! Go on, ye Scots tarrier!"

The brawny skipper ostentatiously threw up his hands, but he also threw up one boot. Desmond, however, had been watching for just such a move; he countered the kick with his knee and shin, and Captain Canaughan, uttering a stifled groan, went back against his bunk. He clung there for a moment.

"Bruk my leg, you did!" he said with a grimace of pain.

"Not yet," and Desmond grinned. "But I will the next time. Shut the door, Michael Terence, and drag that lump o' clay inside."

"Look here!" cried out the skipper suddenly. "This is mutiny, d'ye know that? There's none to take charge of this ship but me——"

"You're right there, skipper," said Desmond coolly. "We've just shot your mate, and now we'll shoot you and have done with it."

For an instant the skipper's sturdy face blanched. Then, looking Desmond in the eye, he relaxed and sat down on the edge of his bunk.

"I should ha' known better last night," he said mournfully. "Oh, have ye killed poor Arevalo, too? Well, no matter. The ship will go down any minute now."

"Elucidate!" Desmond felt his head beginning to reel again in the closeness of the cabin. "Who's this Arevalo? Who's the lady?"

Captain Canaughan elucidated. "And we're driving along with no one to handle the ship, if you've killed the mate," he concluded sourly.

"He's a pretty boy," said Desmond, inspecting the Filipino. "Michael Terence! Call two of the men from above and have him carried for'ard. Let him take a hand at the work."

The fiddler grinned and departed. Canaughan uttered a growling protest.

"Look here! This ain't legal! You'll hang for this killin'——"

"Legal my eye!" said Desmond cheerfully. "What land are we heading for?"

The skipper glanced at the telltale. "Headin' for Point Galera and Mindoro, unless we're driftin' much. In an hour it'll be blowin' the sticks out of her. We'll need the engine to get into the lee o' Lubang or Cape Calavite. Then we'll fetch Mamburu well enough."

"In other words, we're heading south?" Desmond frowned as if puzzled. "Well, will you pass me your word to take my orders and to leave me and O'Sullivan unmolested?"

"I will not," returned Canaughan promptly. "I've me duty to the owners to consider, and I'm a righteous man. Ye can't escape sea law, Desmond; a

little craft like this even is harried down most amazing if there's a thing wrong. That murder will hang ye. It does all very well in pirate stories, but this is no book, mind. All this sort o' thing——"

"You don't compliment my brains, but I'll surprise you there, skipper," replied Desmond. A knock sounded at the door. "Come in!"

O'Sullivan and the two men appeared. Desmond cocked his eye at the skipper.

"Put Arevalo for'ard," he said softly, "and in five minutes ye can go on deck free and unharmed. Otherwise——" He gestured with the weapon in his hand.

"Carry that man for'ard," ordered the skipper. "Empty a bucket over him."

The two men departed, bearing the limp figure of Arevalo between them, swinging to the lurch of the vessel.

"I've not the heart to be shooting ye, skipper," said Desmond simply. "Also, I'm in a bad way. So get out o' here, with me blessing, and don't come back. Stay above."

Canaughan started. "Don't come back! And what does that mean, then?"

"What it says. Have ye a gun on your person?"

"No." The skipper's eye rolled longingly toward a desk in the corner.

"Then go ahead; I'm thinking that we have more or less of a monopoly on the firearms aboard. Show the skipper out, Michael Terence, and mind his boot!"

"Mutiny, this is; rank mutiny!" said the skipper hoarsely, his face purpling. "Ye'll hang for it, I warn ye!"

"Ah, but who's to do the hanging?" Desmond laughed, and gestured toward the door. "You'll not be needing your cozy cabin, skipper, dear; if you'll take my advice, you'll get those hatches battened down in a hurry. One good fol-

lowing sea will sink this walnut shell of a ship. So run up, like a good fellow!"

A torrid exclamation, which did not partake of righteousness, fell from Captain Canaughan as the grinning fiddler opened the door and bowed mockingly; then the skipper was gone.

Desmond relaxed in the bunk.

"Lock the door, Michael Terence, and make sure o' the bolts," he said. "Help yourself to the skipper's clothing, lad, and get warm. Wake me in a couple of hours, but not before, on the life of you! And no whisky, lad; we're done with that, eh?"

"But I've left me fiddle up for'ard!" protested O'Sullivan fiercely, his eyes widening with dismay. "Oh *mhuire as truagh!* Me old fiddle, that I'd not be losin' for a mint o' money——"

"Leave it be, lad," said Desmond drowsily. "They'll batten on the hatches now, and the fiddle will be safe, I'll warrant you. In two hours, mind, I'll——"

He rolled back in the bunk. O'Sullivan locked and bolted the door.

### CHAPTER III.

#### AREVALO TAKES CHARGE.

WHEN Captain Miles Canaughan got on deck he found himself confronted by a situation entirely out of his experience and which laid him completely aback.

For one thing, the *San Gregorio* was not at all on the course indicated by the telltale in his cabin; she was driving before the wind, and she was driving almost due west by three-quarters south. The mate had given these orders four hours previously when the skipper had gone below, said the helmsman—a great Norseman named Balder-son. The mate, however, was dead, and no one else could explain these orders.

For another thing, the schooner car-

ried an auxiliary gasoline engine, and when Mr. Canaughan ordered this started he found it completely and efficiently smashed. What was worse, the skipper's vigilant eye presently discovered that the small launch, carried forward in place of one of the boats, possessed a tarpaulin which was flapping. The lashings of the tarp had been cut, and the launch's engine had also been put beautifully out of commission.

Some one had wrecked the two engines, and some one had interfered with the telltale. Who was guilty and why? There was no answer. The men, all island riffraff with the exception of Balderson, protested absolute innocence and ignorance, and Canaughan was constrained to believe them. The mate was obviously guilty of setting a false course, and therefore must be to blame for the whole business.

Bewildered, seeing himself able to blame Desmond for only a part of his own helpless position, with the hurricane wallowing down and the schooner going to the devil, the skipper set himself to the job of saving his ship. As the sea was rising fast, he fell to work making a sea anchor, which would hold the *San Gregorio* head to the wind and would let her ride out the night. She seemed to be driving along the track of Singapore traffic, so Captain Canaughan got out his flags, hoisted NC, and swore at his men to move lively.

At this juncture the dripping figure of Juan Arevalo approached him with difficulty.

"Who hit me?" demanded the Filipino, holding one hand to his injured head.

The skipper beckoned him into the shelter of the deck house, and briefly shouted that two of the crew had mutinied and were even now snugly ensconced in the skipper's cabin. Juan Arevalo had already seen the mate's body slipped over the rail, just before the fo'c's'le hatch was battened down;

but now he caught Canaughan's arm and laid his lips to the skipper's ear. His face, livid under its swarthy hue, worked desperately.

"I've got to get below in a hurry!" he shouted.

The skipper grinned in a sneer. "Stay where y' are," he bawled. "No time to fool with ye now. Got to——"

Arevalo's keen features contorted in a sudden passion of anger.

"I said I was going below!" he repeated furiously. "You fool, everything may be done by this time—Juliana——"

Canaughan gave him a sharp look. "What d'ye mean? Ye promised me there'd be no smuggling this trip. Well, anyhow, you stay here. We'll be needing you soon enough."

A frightful cry broke from Arevalo. He shouted at two of the men, working a few feet away. At his call, they leaped up. Without warning, Arevalo swung his fist against the face of the incredulous skipper.

Canaughan, with a bellow of rage, rushed for the Filipino, but his two men got in the way. One of them flung himself at Canaughan's legs, the other whacked the skipper over the head with a club.

The skipper had looked for no such mutinous play as this. The treachery caught him unawares, and he sprawled senseless on the deck before he quite knew what had happened. Arevalo searched him for a weapon, but vainly, and leaped up with a stormy fury in his keen, handsome features.

"Throw him below, forward!" he ordered. "And get the battens off the after companion. I'll have to go down."

"Wait!" One of the men caught at his arm, with a glance aft. "Balderson ain't in on the deal. We ain't had time to fix him."

Arevalo glanced at the helmsman, then laughed grimly. "Go and cut the

ropes from the wheel. He'll stay there, then, for if he left the helm the schooner would broach and go under. I'll be back and interview Balderson before you get the sea anchor out, sabe?"

Two more of the men were called. The body of Captain Canaughan was carried for'ard, while Arevalo ran with the other two men to the after companion, as though some furious impulse spurred him to get below.

Balderson, his viking figure straining at the helm, bellowed to the other men in frantic fury; for one of them had cut the ropes, and leave the wheel now he dared not. They laughed at him, yet in their laughter was fear of the skies and sea, dread in the shaking rigging above them, the weak confusion of uncaptured men. Balderson roared to close the hatches again, but they ignored him, for Arevalo had gone below aft, and as they waited, circling about Balderson at the helm, they drew gold from their pockets and grinned at the Norseman. And Balderson, being no fool, fell silent and waited.

So the ship drove, open to the seas, leaderless, while ever the thunderous masses of water piled up astern and swept below, upheaving the careening schooner as they tossed her into the heavens, foaming away again ahead of her, the tiny rag of storm sail thrusting her onward like a wild thing.

Presently the torso of Juan Arevalo rose from the after companionway and he beckoned the nearest men. His face was deathly white, and his dark eyes blazed with strange fires. Now, as always, these island ruffians stood in awe of his keen intellect and the infernal energy that drove him like some inward lash.

"Send Balderson to me!" he shouted as they bent closer. His eyes darted to windward, searched the sky and sea; turning, he swept the horizon. Then he dropped into the passage below and

waited, a revolver in his hand. A moment later Balderson, relieved from the helm, awkwardly swung through the opening and half fell down the ladder as a hissing comber swept the vessel high and twisted her against the helm.

"Stand quiet, you!" said Arevalo, covering the big man. Down here, out of the smothering wind, one could speak and be heard. "I had no chance to see you last night. Do you want to earn five hundred, gold, with a hundred down in advance? Speak quickly."

The Norseman wiped the brine from his beard, looked into the revolver mouth, and assented:

"Sure."

"The mate was in with me," said Arevalo, picking his English words carefully. "But he was killed. So we must keep the skipper until later to navigate. You will see that he is tied up and stowed away in the forecabin. Eh?"

"Sure," and Balderson nodded heavily. Then he grinned a little. "I'm glad the mate is gone. But the owner, Señor Salcedo?"

A slight tremor seemed to pass over Arevalo's countenance; a rippling quiver, as though somewhere inside of him the steel soul had buckled ever so little. Then he smiled thinly.

"The don is dead," he said with quiet precision. "No, I didn't do it; 'twas those two men who killed the mate. They're barricaded in the captain's cabin now, and they can stay there for a while; we'll batten the hatches presently. They must have stunk him out—shoved some Chinese punk under his door. It killed him. Doña Juliana is unconscious and sick, but safe."

Balderson looked steadily at the speaker for a moment.

"That's why you were in such a hell of a hurry to get below, huh?" he said, frowning in ponderous concentration. "You were afraid she would be killed, too. Huh!"

Arevalo's handsome features again showed that indefinable tremor. He had not thought that Balderson would so quickly perceive the truth. But he did not attempt further lies.

"Yes," he said with his deadly air of quiet, "yes, you're right; but I'm going to keep the cap'n's log—and those other two men did it. Understand?"

Balderson scratched his head. Slow admiration dawned in his blue eyes.

"The log? Then ye mean to shove along?"

"Of course." Arevalo showed impatience. "Don't you understand that everything has to be proper? They're responsible for the mate; I'll make them responsible for everything else, including the broken engines."

"And—Doña Juliana?"

"Marries me when we pick up the islands."

Again Balderson scratched his head. "Can't keep it quiet," he said heavily. "Too many in it. Me and the other five men."

Arevalo smiled. His teeth were very white and even.

"I'm telling—you. They won't know the rest; they're afraid of me, and they'll keep quiet. Besides, *they* put the cap'n below, and they'll be quick enough to let the two in the cabin be blamed, and ask no questions."

Balderson nodded with ponderous unraveling of thought.

"Seems all right. Discharge all hands at Mindoro, huh, and get 'em shipped out on the first ship, huh? All right. We know you got the brains, Arevalo. But what's the idea of runnin' this course? This wind, now; she's bad."

"The storm will suit us well enough," returned Arevalo. "I have the chart, and the mate picked out the course. If the wind falls by to-morrow noon—and it will fall; this blow is a quick puff—we'll be all right. Sure, there's a reason! Leave it to me. One thou-

sand extra to all hands if everything goes off well."

The Norseman's frown cleared. "That's good. Good! Huh?"

"It ought to be. Send down two men to bring up Señor Salcedo; tell them he was killed by those two devils down here. Then we'll batten down everything."

"And Doña Juliana?"

"I'll lock her in her cabin. She's too sick to bother us until night, anyway. We can come down to-night and put the two men in irons if they give trouble, then make her comfortable. Leave that to me."

"You got brains, huh?" said Balderson admiringly, and held out his big hand. "Shake!"

Smiling, Arevalo shook hands with him; then the Norseman leaped to the deck above and swung his arm to the nearest of the men. But Arevalo, standing under the ladder below, did not see a dark figure that slipped off into the shadows of the passage, nor did he detect the opening and shutting of the captain's cabin door.

Michael Terence O'Sullivan sidled into the cabin, shut, locked, and bolted the door, and then dropped into a corner and propped himself against the pitch of the schooner. He produced a dirty handkerchief and wiped his face—and again. The cold sweat was breaking out upon him endlessly, and cowardice was wringing his soul. Since the days when the white plague had weakened him and stripped him of his own, O'Sullivan had come to calling himself a coward. And there was a fleck of red on his lips as he held down a cough.

He had stolen out, meaning to have a try for that beloved fiddle of his, and he had all but walked upon Arevalo, standing there below the companion ladder. And he had heard the conversation with Balderson. As a result, O'Sullivan was now sweating for his

skin, and for the skin of Gerald Desmond, who was fast asleep and snoring.

With a final swipe at his brow, the fiddler pulled himself erect.

"God help us all!" he said softly, with a sob in his throat that told the words for a prayer. Outside, he could hear a trampling of feet in the passage. He went to the desk in the corner and sat there. Presently he opened up the desk and began to go through it systematically. But he did not wake Desmond, for the time was far from up that Desmond had set.

After he had rifled the skipper's desk to his satisfaction, containing nothing more lootable than thirty dollars in American bills, O'Sullivan went to the passage door, and after listening a moment opened it. Outside, all was dark. Arevalo and his men had gone. The hatches were on fast.

Already there was a perceptible difference in the movement of the ship. She no longer rose like a cork to the waves, but from the bows came heavy crashes; the sea anchor was out, and now she was sullenly heading into the wind and welter while the seas smashed into her bows and swept her foredeck.

"Arevalo is facin' the work of it, anyhow," muttered O'Sullivan, shaking his head. "A bad one, he is! All this is crazy man's work, yet the lad is as cool-blooded about it as a Scot! Aye, he's a bad one, I'm thinkin'."

Wrinkling up his nose at a heavy, oppressive odor, the fiddler set to work exploring the cabins. Nothing rewarded his search until he came to the stern cabin, and the door of this was locked; the key was in the lock, so he turned it and stepped inside.

He realized that this entire after end of the cabin space had been converted into an apartment for the owner's use. The first cabin had no doubt been that of Señor Salcedo; it was heavy with a sickening sweet and oppressive scent, the meaning of which had been made

plain to O'Sullivan by the conversation between Arevalo and Balderson. Although the furnishings of this cabin were luxurious, the fiddler hastened on to the interior chamber, a large and beautiful cabin plump in the schooner's stern. That this had been the original captain's cabin was evidenced by the trapdoor in the floor, leading down into the run where the ship's cabin stores were kept. A curtained bed was in the corner, screwed to the floor.

The fiddler had outfitted himself with warm clothes from the skipper's cabin, and also with a sea cap. Now, as he advanced toward the bed, he removed his cap, and was, despite the lack of observers, quite obviously embarrassed. He drew aside the curtains of the bed and blushed deeply, but his lips tightened with determination.

"*Que quiere?*" demanded a faint voice; then, in English and with feminine alarm: "Who are you? What are you doing here——"

One must admit candidly that few men, thus placed at the bedside of a lady reared in the most severe Castilian tradition, and finding themselves confronted by the alarm and indignant anger of that lady, could have justified their intrusion without a single word. Michael Terence O'Sullivan, it is true, was too overcome to speak; but he could smile, and he did smile. And in the little pinched face of him, in the manner of his smile, in the wild tangle of hair and the piercing, shrewd black eyes, there was a transfiguration. It is like that when some men smile. All the outward, world-disfigured body of them is forgotten, and the soul shows. The fiddler had none of the cheerful deviltry of Desmond's laughter, but in his smiling face was something greater and more powerful—a wistful coercion, a bashful, appealing tenderness.

"How did you get in here?" demanded Doña Juliana more quietly.

"Sure, lady, I walked," said O'Sulli-

van. "Now don't be throublin' the sweet heart of you by fearin' me; but if ye'll listen a bit I'll have somethin' to tell ye. *Mhuire as truagh*, but it's sorry I am to be havin' such a story to tell yourself! It's a sorry man I am, to be bringin' the tears to the sweet face of you, lady——"

"Are you a madman or a fool?" exclaimed the lady, but her voice, despite her words, was frightened by the ominous tone of O'Sullivan.

"Oh," cried the fiddler, "it's a lady of the fairy folk ye are! Well, my heart is broke for ye, but if ye must have the truth——"

And he told her of all that Arevalo had done.

Desmond awakened, meantime, to find darkness come down on the cabin, and the door swinging ajar. He crawled out of the bunk and stretched himself, then observed that he was alone. Also he was ravenously hungry, and the sickness had left him.

There was a scraping at the door, and O'Sullivan entered.

"Oh, it's up you are, sir!" The fiddler closed the door behind him.

"Let's have a light and some grub," exclaimed Desmond. "If——"

"Whist, now! Let me be tellin' you everything first," broke in the other hurriedly. "The lady is dressin' herself, bless the sweet face of her, as well as she can for the tears, and she knows all about us and about her poor father bein' kilt in his sleep by that murderous Arevalo, bad luck to him! And about the poor cap'n bein' kilt, and——"

"Thunder o' Finn!" exclaimed Desmond, rubbing his eyes. "What's all this?"

"It's what I'm tryin' to tell you, sir, if ye'll give me half a chanct. Then we'll go into the big cabin yonder and maybe find a bit o' grub, and whilst ye entertain the lady I'll maybe have a try for me poor old fiddle——"

2ATB

"Stop it!" ordered Desmond desperately. "Ye wild divil, will ye begin at the start and tell me what's happened? How long have I slept?"

"A bit over two hours, maybe more," returned O'Sullivan. "Now here 'tis, sir. I had a notion to find me fiddle again, but at the companion I saw Arevalo——"

He recounted all that he had overheard, and followed it up by his conversation with Doña Juliana.

"The sweet face of her 'u'd bring tears to your throat," he concluded earnestly. "And if we could be occupyin' them cabins our two selves we'd have more room, besides all bein' together. And when Arevalo comes, as he said he'd be comin' toward night——"

"We'll be there, eh?" struck in Desmond.

"You will be," countered the other, "but I'll be waitin' to pop out on deck and maybe get that fiddle o' mine. I'm tellin' you the truth, sir, it's mortal hard to think o' that sweet fiddle lyin' forward and maybe broke or hurt——"

"Go on with you!" and Desmond laughed as he pushed the fiddler toward the door. "You have the right idea, Michael Terence! Let's get on in there, and light a lamp or two. We'll take care of Doña Juliana, and don't worry your head about Arevalo saddling any of his dirty work on us. Come on!"

Crossing to the rear cabin, Desmond lighted the big lamp slung in gimbals, and sniffed the heavy-sweet air as he glanced around. To one side were two bunks against the wall. A desk, a small bookcase, a framed painting of a buxom and half-veiled lady, doubtless Señora Salcedo; a cupboard for clothes, a washstand; nothing else. A port had been hooked open, and flying spray had wet the wall.

Desmond went to the desk and opened it. By the confusion he guessed that Arevalo had been before him;



however, a small box of cheroots remained, and into this he dug. As he lighted one he was conscious that the door to the inner cabin had opened. He turned, to meet Juliana Salcedo y Montes. And amazement grew within him.

## CHAPTER IV.

CANAUGHAN BARGAINS.

GERALD DESMOND had as much knowledge of women as the next man, and was always willing to learn more. As he looked at Juliana Salcedo he realized that she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen; exotically beautiful, yet marked with the golden hair and gray eye of the purest Spanish blood. Her gown of palest green island silk accentuated her high coloring, the rich curves of cheek and arm and figure. And, withal, she seemed to be entirely poised.

"This," stammered Michael Terence, "this is the Desmond, ma'am, of whom was speakin'."

Desmond set his cap on the desk and bowed.

"If I were you, madam," he said, a gay smile deepening the humorous wrinkles about his level eyes, "I'd sit down. Every once in so often we get thumped—and while I'd love to be helpin' you out of the corner I'd hate to see you thrown there. You're Doña Juliana?"

"Yes," she said quietly, with only the dark circles about her eyes to tell of grief and illness. She took the chair which O'Sullivan shoved forward. Under the quiet scrutiny of her gray eyes, Desmond felt startled; their self-possession, after all she had just learned, was amazing.

Desmond knew nothing of the pure Spanish breed, cloistered apart from the world in a narrow cell of straight-laced prudery, with fires deeply repressed yet capable of volcanic eruptions. At the

moment, indeed, it seemed to him that this girl, for all her amazing beauty, was like an icicle. Out of pity and warm impulse he resolved to thaw the icicle.

"Thunder o' Finn!" he swore to himself. "What a lovely job for ye, Gerald!"

Juliana, when she had finished her scrutiny of his features, nodded slightly as though reassured by the man.

"This," she said evenly, "is a very unfortunate situation, sir. You can readily see that it is difficult for me. Mr. O'Sullivan has explained everything, and it seems that he and you must occupy this cabin."

"To be sure," returned Desmond unconcernedly. "Michael Terence, me lad! Go into the lady's cabin and lift the trap in the floor. Ye'll find the cabin stores stowed below, I'm thinking. Get up something for dinner, and Miss Juliana will fix up a bit to eat for us."

O'Sullivan obeyed. The gray eyes of Doña Juliana flashed, as though in swift resentment. Desmond had entirely ignored the compromising features of the situation, and yet his gay smile was very infectious.

"I am not accustomed to cooking for—" she began, but Desmond waved his hand and broke in with a disconcerting air of careless ease.

"Oh, ye'll get used to it, believe me, and meantime we'll make the best of it," he said, puffing his cheroot alight. "D'ye see, Miss Juliana, there's just the three of us, and we have to stick together, each one of us doing our bit. I happen to have a natural longing to save my own neck, so I'm in command. Now, then, what about this man Arvalo? Have ye any idea why he should have murdered your poor father? Why is he workin' hand in glove with the mate o' this ship, after killin' Cap'n Canaughan? What game is he up to, can ye tell me?"

The girl shook her head, sudden tears

in her eyes. Mention of her dead father had conquered her pride.

"I—I don't know," she answered, faltering. "Some time ago he asked for my hand, but my father laughed at him; he is only a Filipino, you know. My father had business dealings with him, but I'm sure did not expect him aboard here. He was not invited."

Desmond chuckled. Evidently Don Gregorio had considered Filipinos from the old standpoint.

Inside of five minutes, Doña Juliana was appreciably thawing beneath the sun of Desmond's cheerful insouciance. With every other word he brought the flame of resentment to her gray eyes, shattering her traditions and ignoring her prejudices; yet so subtly commanding was his humor, so completely did he take things for granted, that she could say nothing. To check this impulsive person was quite beyond her. Indeed, when O'Sullivan returned, Desmond was gently patting Doña Juliana's hand, and he leaped up to help the fiddler with such an entire lack of confusion that before the girl could find the proper rebuke the occasion was gone.

"It's a jewel of a larder down there," observed O'Sullivan, as tins and packages were opened and the desk cleaned off to serve as table. "If it wasn't for me fiddle, now——"

"Leave me," commanded Desmond. "I'll get the fiddle presently. Here, Miss Juliana," and he pressed a package of biscuit into the girl's hands, "open these while I get the top out o' this meat tin, and we'll be ready."

Because he evidently expected her to do it, Juliana repressed her indignation and obeyed. Then, sweeping aside her protests, Desmond forced her to eat something.

However, Desmond was thinking less of Juliana than of Arevalo, whom he rightly estimated as a hard nut to crack. He found that the man's presence and

activities were as much of a mystery to Juliana as to himself.

"It appears that he's done for the skipper," observed Desmond, feeling quite himself after the hurried meal, "and it's certain that he murdered your father, Miss Juliana, with his heathenish fumes. There must be some purpose in what he's doing—but what's the purpose? A man of his position and abilities would not try such a wild game without reason. Of course, Miss Juliana, he might be intendin' to run away with you——"

"With me?" she broke forth angrily. "Oh, if I had a weapon——"

"Well, it's no insult that he'd be wantin' to put the *comether* on you; there's many a man would want the same. But it's hardly reason *enough* for all the wild devil has done," said Desmond coolly. "There's something big back of it. What it is I can't guess, but we'll find out soon enough. By the way the old girl is easin' into the sea, the storm is blowing itself out. Michael Terence, me lad! Run and stick your black head out o' the stern windows and tell me if there's much overhang from the quarter-deck, like a good boy!"

"The stern windows?" echoed Doña Juliana in surprise. "Why, they're shuttered with iron from outside! I remember my father closed the shutters early this morning."

"Good enough," and Desmond nodded to the hesitating fiddler. "Run along with ye, me lad, and open the shutters before ye stick that head outside."

With a grin the fiddler vanished into the adjoining cabin. Doña Juliana gazed at Desmond, puzzled alarm evident in her eyes.

"Please tell me what you mean, Mr. Desmond?"

"I've got to go for'ard to get the lad's fiddle," returned Desmond confidently. "Ye see, he forgot and left it

in the forecabin. Since I can't go by way o' the hatches, I'll have to crawl up over the stern and——"

"*Dios?*" ejaculated the girl, staring at him. "But that is madness! For a fiddle——"

"Oh, this is a particular fiddle," rejoined Desmond with his gay laugh. "It'd break the poor lad's heart, yonder, to lose the instrument o' torture. But the seas are going down fast, and since we're headed into the wind, the stern will be sheltered."

"Yes, but Arevalo and the men are coming down here!"

"Sure; and while they're here I'll be gettin' the fiddle. Isn't that the height of logic, now?"

"But—but what will I do if they come and break in?" cried the girl desperately.

"Do nothing, Miss Juliana, and let Michael Terence do the doing. Thunder o' Finn! If ye'd seen the beautiful way he shot the mate it would've done your sweet heart good! The pity is we didn't know all the ins and outs of this business when we knocked Arevalo on the head; that was a mortal bad error. Ah, there's the minstrel boy now! How goes it?"

"Grand an' fine, sir," responded O'Sullivan, who had doused the light of the after cabin before opening the shuttered stern windows. "Sure, there's no overhang at all to speak of, except maybe a bit that will give ye a twist or two gettin' over at the top——"

Desmond rose and pressed out the glowing end of the cheroot he had lighted.

"Then I leave the lady in your hands, Michael Terence. If any one comes to the door, shoot first and talk afterward—and Heaven bless ye if the bullet hits Arevalo!"

"Supposin' they break down the door?" suggested the fiddler.

"Then use your own judgment." Desmond seized the hand of Juliana

and pressed it warmly, then started for the after cabin. "Mind now!" he flung over his shoulder. "Use the automatic ye took from Arevalo; it'll put a bullet through these narra-wood doors like paper!"

He was gone into the darkness, the gaze of Juliana following him in troubled uncertainty.

Beside her curtained bed, Desmond found the window which O'Sullivan had opened, large catches keeping the iron shutters from banging. The ocean was a smother of blackness, but by the white lines of foam Desmond could see that there was no danger of the water flooding into the cabin, unless the cable binding the sea anchor should part. Toward the horizon, a faint rift of moonlight was piercing the heavens, and Desmond rightly imagined that the storm was blowing itself out.

After some time he was able to make out the line of quarter-deck rail above. He gave a grunt of satisfaction, and thrust himself out upon the window ledge, perching precariously as he clutched upward. His fingers gripped one of the struts supporting the rail, and with a heave he pulled himself upward. A minute afterward he crouched near the loosely lashed wheel.

He saw immediately that the deck was deserted hereabouts, and he started forward, only to come to a pause as a thin pencil of light stabbed the darkness ahead. It was the galley door, opening a few inches to the roll of the ship. Again it opened, more widely, and Desmond had a glimpse of Arevalo standing inside, talking with the Manchu cook. Then Arevalo came out, and sent a shout forward, which was answered by the bellow of Balderson.

Barely in time, Desmond flung himself prostrate beside the deck house as the men came aft. It was evident that he had chosen his time well for the attempt, since Arevalo and the six men halted at the battened hatch of

the after companionway, and began to strip off the battens. The yellow cook had joined the others.

"Not a drop o' water over the bow this half hour," said the ponderous voice of Balderson. "When we get this done, we can drop the port watch below, huh? I'll keep the deck until midnight, Mr. Arevalo—" and the wind blew the rest away in a sudden gust.

Desmond did not wait to hear more, but edged forward until confident that he would not be seen, then leaped to his feet and ran for the forecandle hatchway. In another moment he was bending over the tarpaulin, his unaccustomed hands working at the cleats, battens, and wedges. It was a small hatch, and when he had the tarp removed he had no difficulty in lifting and throwing over the cover.

Pausing only to make sure that he had not been observed and followed, Desmond started down into the black hole; a lurch of the ship threw him from the ladder and he fell cursing upon a soft heap that squirmed beneath him but made no sound as he struck.

Startled beyond words by this unexpected encounter, knowing that a man lay there beside him, Desmond reached out with throttling grip—only to realize that the man was bound and gagged. He fumbled in his pocket and found a match.

"Thunder o' Finn!" he muttered, twirling out the flame as he recognized the figure. "Canaughan, upon me word! And I thought that murdering devil had killed ye. Here, let me ease your fat mouth o' that gag, skipper, and mind ye don't bite my fingers."

After an instant, a torrent of sustained but husky blasphemy apprised him that the skipper had been rid of the gag.

"Listen, now!" exclaimed Desmond quickly. "No noise, or we're both of us trapped here! Juliana is safe, al-

though Arevalo murdered the don in some stinkin' fashion, and we thought he'd done for you, too."

"Let loose my hands an' feet!" rasped the hoarse skipper strainingly.

"Not yet, me bucko," and Desmond grinned in the darkness. "I've a few things to say—"

"Ye confounded ass!" came the retort. "Do you know we've been drifting out into the China Sea, that the engines are bruk, that—"

"I know that your friend Arevalo is up to some diviltry," said Desmond, reaching into the corner bunk and securing O'Sullivan's fiddle case. "What is it, d'ye know?"

"No! But if you don't cut me loose, ye blasted and bedamned papist, I'll knock your—"

"You'll stay right here, eh? Exactly. Now, skipper, dear, let me impress upon your blighted brains that we're in one hell of a tight place. From what we've learned, Arevalo and your gentlemanly mate were in partnership, and now Arevalo is in command o' things. But I'm in command o' the two after cabins, with all the cabin stores and a lot o' bottled spring water; and we're quite comfortable, thank you.

"Stop your cursing and listen, ye righteous Belfast bloater! If I leave ye here, Mr. Arevalo means to finish you off proper; and unless ye promise to show the light o' reason, I'll leave ye here. I don't want an obstreperous fool like you spoilin' me plans. This situation demands delicacy and brains, neither of which you own. I don't like you, and you don't like me; but if ye pass your word to take orders from me I'll cut ye loose."

"I'll see ye damned first!" hoarsely returned the skipper.

"Then good night to ye, and pleasant dreams," said Desmond, starting for the ladder. "I'll have the ship in charge by to-morrow night, but I'm afraid ye'll not benefit by it, poor soul!"

"Hold on!" muttered the skipper hastily. "Can't ye see that I'll agree?"

"And no trouble from ye until we set foot ashore?"

"Not a bit—but I'll wipe your damned face off the map when we do!"

"It'll give me pleasure to reciprocate," said Desmond, returning. "I'll take me knife to these lines—heavens, but they've lashed ye tight! I don't see why they were so afraid of you, when a native and a bunch of island scum could knock ye off your own quarter-deck."

The skipper uttered furious but inarticulate oaths, and staggered to his feet.

"Give me your arm when we get up," he said at last. "It's a bad crack over the skull I got. Where are the devils?"

Desmond explained the situation. Despite his weak and battered body, Canaughan was all for descending the after companion and catching Arevalo's gang in the rear, but this Desmond refused to countenance.

"It does ye credit," he observed with a mild sarcasm that infuriated Canaughan anew, "but 'twill not do, skipper, dear. I'm none too good on my pins, nor are you, at present. Besides, why not let Arevalo have the ship a while, and see what he's up to? Let him have her; let him work out his guts savin' her, and when fine weather comes we'll take her from him like that!"

"Ye seem mighty confident," returned the other.

"I was never knocked in the head by me own men," said Desmond, chuckling.

The skipper said something under his breath, and added: "Let's go, then," in a tone of suppressed emotion.

As the two men gained the deck, they heard the muffled report of a shot come from aft, followed by a chorus of yells, then silence.

"More lively, now!" commanded Desmond sharply. "We'll have the devil's own time goin' back the way I came. Where'll I find a bit o' loose line?"

Canaughan indicated a line, and Desmond seized the coil in passing.

At the after companion they heard a rumble of voices from below, but did not pause. As Desmond had thought, it proved no easy task to regain the stern window from the deck. The line was passed over the stern rail, and Desmond swung himself down first. Aided by the swing of the ship, he managed to hook a foot inside the window, and then let the line swing out until Canaughan had followed him, when he pulled in the skipper.

"All serene," said Desmond, landing Canaughan softly. "You pull the line after you, so they'll not be guessing how you got away, and where."

He hastened into the lighted cabin, where he found O'Sullivan standing, automatic in hand. Juliana was still sitting as he had left her, staring at the door, whose shattered panel bore witness to the fiddler's shot.

"What's doing?" demanded Desmond. "Here's your fiddle, and the skipper's coming."

"Glory be!" exclaimed the fiddler. "They've gone, sir."

"Gone? You're sure?"

"Aye. We heard 'em say something about waiting until the *Chang Yan* showed up, when everything would be all right."

"What the devil!"

A cry of relief broke from Juliana as the sturdy skipper appeared and shook hands. Canaughan, however, could throw no light upon the mystery of the *Chang Yan*; he had never heard of any such craft, he vowed.

"Well, let be," said Desmond. "So long as they've gone we can recuperate in peace. To-morrow I'll set me brains to work, and we'll consider the matter

o' taking over the ship. Did ye get Arevalo, Michael Terence?"

"I did not, sir," rejoined the fiddler mournfully. "I got somebody, but not him, more's the pity!"

"Better luck next time, then," and Desmond took a cheroot. "Skipper, will ye have a bite of supper? Then Michael Terence will play us a tune, maybe, and we'll have a drink to our good luck, and go to sleep. There's but two bunks for the three of us, but we'll manage."

"Arevalo has something up his sleeve," said the skipper dourly. "And we're not headin' south at all, but drivin' west. Everybody's gone mad, I'm thinking! What's it all mean?"

"Cheer up, I'm perfectly sane," and Desmond laughed. "And mind, skipper, that you've passed your word to be a righteous man!"

Canaughan gave him an eloquent look, and rubbed his cracked scone.

"Wait till we get ashore, that's all!" he said grimly. "Just wait!"

TO BE CONTINUED.



## THE CURTAIN

By Nina Wilcox Putnam

THE painted face in the looking-glass  
Stares back at Harlequin;  
There is a noise outside and a smell of gas,  
But he sits quite still with mechanical grin.

The gay crowd pours from the theater door  
Into the rain and sleet;  
But Harlequin sits quite still before  
They robe him in a winding sheet.



# The Tenth Crisis

By  
L.J. Beeston



WITH the stealthy step of a cat Beddows came up the wide avenue of clipped hollies, his feet making as much sound on the smooth turf as the wind among its minute grass stems. Once in the splash of shadow hung by the gables and chimneys he halted, sending a strained gaze backward in search of a possible pursuer.

But he saw only the gray-green sea of moonlight on the grass which was already just touched by the hoarfrost, and the tapering spire of the Scotch fir at the end of the avenue, with its flattened crown of leaves, its needles, set aslant right up under the processional clouds.

Half a dozen more yards brought him to as many steps neatly cut in a slope which extended this side of the house. The double glass doors of a French window were at the top of the steps. For five minutes he was busy with a diamond cutter and a treacle pad. He put a hand through the orifice

thus formed and cautiously drew aside one of the chenille curtains.

He saw first a round table with claw feet, a table of black oak, so polished that the three lighted candle holders upon it cast points of light as if into a dark pool. There was also an open book upon this table and a cut-glass tumbler and a decanter with a long neck and a box of cigarettes. Beside it was a capacious armchair, with cushions in the seat angles. A wood fire chuckled and spluttered sociably. The interior of the room was altogether very cozy and inviting, and Beddows did not hesitate to enter.

He looked round with the penetrating, the all-embracing eyes of the cracksman of experience. It was a no uncertain expression which made taut every line in his face. Known to his associates as "the killer," he looked the part, that fatal rôle, as he glided forward with his tread of a panther.

Just what he wanted was in a cabinet in a corner. He knew perfectly well



that it was in there, for he was no chance, no snatch thief. When a little jade clock on the mantelpiece chimed the half hour after midnight he darted a yellow flash of his eyes at the interrupter, then went straight on. He reached the cabinet. Three minutes were between him and attainment.

Suddenly a calm voice demanded: "What the devil is your little game?"

Beddows spun round as if touched by a hot iron. A man was standing by the table, a man in evening dress. He was brave, this fellow, for he kept his hands in his trousers pockets, and his frown showed only keen exasperation. Beddows realized this in the moment allowed him. A leap and his fingers were round one of the brass candlesticks. The other recoiled hastily, collided with the armchair, and lost his balance. Beddows struck home with his heavy weapon, struck with the most brutal force. The man fell across the arms of the chair as if a rifle bullet had put out his life.

Beddows glared down at the inert form, the candle holder clutched in his hand as if for a second blow. His under jaw stuck out menacingly; a phosphor light played over his eyes; he breathed stertorously. He recovered himself quickly, forced his iron nerve to hold good. Deliberately he relighted the candle in the holder and replaced it on the table. He poured out some of the brandy in the decanter and tossed it off.

He leaned over the still figure, which had been struck on the back of the head. He lifted it and seated it in the chair, propping it, naturally, with the cushions. He felt the heart, put his cheek to the lips.

"All right," ran his desperate thought. "He'll come round in an hour."

Then he straightened himself, and was already looking again toward the cabinet when he fancied he heard a

slight sound. Six steps would have taken him to the glass doors; four to the open door by which had entered the spoiler of his sport. The occasion seemed urgent, and Beddows chose the four steps.

He was in a large, square-shaped hall, with thick rugs on its waxed floor. He glided to the side of a deep-embosured window, semidark, and waited for developments. He had practically closed the door of the room he had just quitted, shutting out the light, but a pale drift of moon sheen poured through the leaded panes of the window, which gave a view of the holly avenue by which Beddows had approached. His quick-roaming eyes showed him three doors in this hall: one he had just made use of, another obviously led to the outside night, and the third to another room on his left. Opposite the window was a broad, very shallow staircase. The hall was cozily furnished with settees and lounge chairs, with colored prints and etchings on its walls.

The intruder took instantaneous note of these details while he considered his way of escape in case of a second interruption. He had not long to wait.

A creaking stair drew his heated gaze across the hall. A girl was coming down the oaken, uncarpeted staircase. She paused to lean over the banister, to look intently at the door of the room which Beddows had so hastily left. She had unloosened her hair, so that her posture brought her long tresses, black as the raven's wing, either side of her face, which, perhaps because it was framed in that ebony cloud, seemed deathly pale.

Beddows flattened himself against the wall, cursing his continued run of ill luck. At the same time he was held by the movements of the woman on the stairs, who took each step with infinite caution, and kept stopping to look over the handrail at the door below,

which alone seemed to have gripped her attention or aroused her suspicions.

As she descended Beddows saw her eyes shine, heard her quick, nervous breathing. Clearly she had been disturbed by the sound of the scuffle, and he wondered why she came alone to probe the cause of it.

He congratulated himself on having placed the unconscious man in a natural position in the armchair. He reflected: "She will go in there, and while she is trying to rouse the fellow I can get out by this window or the door. But it is the devil's worst luck for me."

The woman reached the bottom of the winding staircase, her eyes never, for a fraction of a moment, leaving the door of the room. Beddows saw that she was dark as night and strikingly handsome. She had loosened her dress of pale-green silk, and he saw the shapely throat agitated as if by an incessant swallowing movement. She was very much afraid.

"And she has need to be," ran the man's desperate thought. "If she sets those staring eyes on me I'll have to strangle a scream before she makes it."

The big dose of neat brandy he had poured down his throat had climbed to his head, and he crouched in the deep shadow like a wild beast.

The woman commenced to cross the hall as if its boards were some mine of death. She put up her hands on which gleamed many jewels, and pushed back the wealth of her black hair. Beddows noticed the flash from her fingers, and it inclined him to think twice before making his escape. She carried a fortune, likely enough, upon her delicate hands, and he did not see why he should let it slip him. For half a minute he meditated a sudden leap forward, but before he could quite make up his mind the other had reached the door of the inner room. She pushed it inward slightly.

She called out, in little more than a whisper, in a whisper of heart-stopping fear: "Are you there, Edmund?"

Receiving no answer, she pushed the door open farther and went in.

Beddows stepped out from the shadow. In nine crises out of ten he could make up his mind in a flash of time. But this was the tenth. He had never been placed in a situation similar; also the brandy did not assist lightning decision. At any moment the woman in there would discover that a crime had been committed, and rush out with a shriek. Should he bolt for it? Should he wait? Should he dart in after her and silence her?

As these questions flamed through his uncertain and somewhat clouded brain the woman reappeared. Her lips were parted with terror; her eyes dilated with horror. Beddows advanced in a rush, but suddenly he pulled himself up with a jerk. He had seen something gleam in the other's clenched right hand. It might be a pistol, it might be a steel blade; he was not quite sure, but it checked him for an instant, and before that instant passed the woman had seen him as he stood in the broad shaft of moonlight, and she put her hand down by her side so that her dress partly covered and concealed it.

The action was involuntary. The abrupt apparition of the man before her imparted such a palsyng shock that her wits were numbed. She fought for breath. The inward, bizarre light of fear blazed in her dilated pupils. Death seemed in her cheeks and lips. A pulse in her beautiful throat beat wildly, and her disengaged hand pressed upon her heart as if to relieve an agony there. Beddows caught the wrist in a strong grasp. He perceived at once that this extreme of terror made him sure master of the situation.

"Best keep quiet," he said menacingly. "I won't hurt you, not unless

you start screaming, and then I'll be as rough as I know how."

"What are you doing here?" she panted.

"That's silly talk. I'm not here on a week-end invite. Now what have you got in that other hand? Put it down! I won't stand any fooling."

She broke away from him suddenly, putting her right hand behind her.

"Give it to me, my beauty," insisted Beddows hoarsely.

The flare in her starting eyes had died down a little; a little was she now mistress of herself.

"Take what you want," she replied breathlessly, "and go. I will not stop you."

Beddows considered. Violence would probably frustrate his aim. He resolved to work without it, but to watch her with the utmost vigilance. He moved to close the door of the room which she had just left.

"Ah, not there!" she exclaimed wildly, and for the first time he noticed that she spoke with a strong foreign accent.

Beddows closed the door. He was abruptly puzzled by that entreaty. What did she mean? His first conclusion was that she believed the inmate of the room to be slumbering in the easy-chair, and that she wished to protect him; but he was forced to let go of that explanation, remembering her excess of terror when she had emerged a minute ago. It was rather baffling, but clearly she did not suspect him of the assault, and he let it go at that for the moment.

While he was closing the door she had drawn the rings from her fingers. She put them—a tiny, glittering pile—upon the back of a settee.

"Will that satisfy you?" she asked, shrinking back at his approach. "If so, take them and leave here at once—immediately—before you are prevented."

Beddows picked up the jewels, weighing them in his palm. He scarcely looked at them, all his attention focused on the woman. She mystified, almost troubled, him. It was certainly natural that she should want him away, but eagerness, more than anxiety, appeared to prompt her beseeching, and although he had not threatened violence, yet her agitation was increasing to a point which suggested collapse. Never had he seen a face so altogether bloodless, and eyes which held a nightmare of terror.

Regarding her with a fierce and puzzled frown, he put the jewels back on the settee as if they hinted at some trap. He growled: "We will see about that. Suppose we get this door open first?"

It was the one leading to the holly avenue. He turned a key and drew a bolt. The inrush of chill air felt good and gave him back his determination to get what he had come for.

"No, I want more than that," said he grimly. "There's a cabinet in that room, and in it there's a box of unset stones."

She shook her head wildly. "No! No!" she forced her dry lips to answer.

"I say there is! Will you fetch it? You'll have to. I'm not fool enough to trust you here alone. Get it, I say, or——"

Suddenly an expression which he could not translate passed over the other's face, driving from it the former paralysis of fear.

"Ah, yes," she exclaimed in a low voice, "you are perfectly right. There are some unset jewels in the cabinet. I had forgotten. Stay where you are and I will bring them to you." And she darted swiftly into the room which she had entered a few minutes ago in such an agony of trepidation.

"Hell seize me if there isn't a depth here I can't swim in," said Beddows.

The woman was back before fifteen seconds had passed. She pulled to the door of the room with infinite care, as if fearing to arouse the inmate from his unnatural slumber.

"Here they are," she panted, her eyes shining with a strange light. "Now go—go!"

Beddows dropped the little silver casket into his pocket, then his right hand gripped the other's shoulder with a crushing, a cruel force.

"There's something that beats me in this," he snarled. "Something I am going to understand." And he commenced to force the other back toward the room. He had little or no intention to enter it, but he was determined to make her speak. "By God!" he went on, as she struggled under his mastery. "I don't believe you are afraid of *me* at all! Out with it! What——"

"Stop!" she exclaimed at the critical moment. "There—there——" She could say no more.

"Go on! Out with it! Quick!"

"In that room—a man—he's dead!"

Beddows released her abruptly. "How do you know that?" he mocked. "Who told you he is dead?"

"I—I killed him!"

"You?"

"I killed him," she moaned, catching at a chair for support.

He stared at her as if he believed she had taken leave of her senses. A long, tense silence ensued. She kept pressing her heart as if she was suffocating, and suddenly Beddows caught another glimpse of something which gleamed in the clutch of her left hand, something which she tried to conceal, which she refused to abandon.

At the same instant a clew to the mystery flashed through his amazement caused by her words. It was a steel blade gripped so jealously in her palm. She had descended the staircase, not because she had heard a disturbance, but with intent to go into that room

and commit a crime. And she *had* gone in. She had found its inmate in an easy-chair, and she had concluded he was sleeping! And so—and so——

"You stabbed him!" exclaimed Beddows aloud, concluding his thought.

She did not answer. She could not answer. Her bosom rose and fell in a tumult.

"You little devil, you!" he went on. "What did you do it for?"

She panted, in her terrible struggle for breath: "I was mad."

He jeered: "That is to say you are sorry."

"Ah, God knows I am! I killed him because I—I loved him."

"And he loved some one else? You cursed little Italian spitfire."

At that moment there was a slight noise which seemed to come from inside the room, but it was not noticed. Beddows continued, in the same jeering tone:

"I thought you were scared of me, but the boot's on the other foot now. Who'd have thought it, to look at you! A nice hell of jealousy you've been stewing in. And now you'll have to pay for it."

In a mute agony she regarded him, as if she did not comprehend the brutal banter, fear and remorse imparting an expression almost of insanity in her staring, motionless eyes.

"Of course I see through your move now," Beddows went on, wiping his hot forehead, which the heat of the room and the half glass of brandy had dewed with perspiration. "I understand why you were suddenly glad for me to go off with the box out of the cabinet in that room. It occurs to you that I might then be wanted for the business in there. Pretty, I must say. I thought I was cute, but I can't hold a candle to the sense in those delicate brains of yours. What was it you used? Some fancy weapon? You can show it to me now, you know."

She extended her left arm jerkily. Inside her palm was a tiny cut-glass vial. She moaned:

"I had left it in his room. I came downstairs for it."

Beddows' brows came together in a bewildered stare.

"Curse me if I follow even now," he muttered.

She panted, trembling fingers clawing at her cheek. "Merciful God, how could I do it! It was in this bottle—that which killed him. I emptied it, every drop of it, into the decanter of brandy!"

"*What?*" roared Beddows in a frightened voice.

That thunderous shout had not died upon his blanching lips when there came the sound of a heavy, dragging

footstep in the inner room. Uncertain fingers fumbled at the handle; the door was jerked back, and the inmate appeared, swaying unsteadily. He saw nothing, heard nothing, for he was still stupefied by the blow from the brass candlestick. The woman uttered a shrill, heart-piercing cry; she rushed at him with extended arms.

Beddows made for the door opening upon the holly avenue. He missed it as if he could not see, found it at a second attempt, ran out into the night. He went down the glade like a madman, throwing distorted shadows upon the frost rime.

And suddenly the broad moon and the lamps of the stars and the procession of clouds swung round and round like a whirlpool, with the seethe and roar of an immense whirlpool!

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## THE DANCE

By Charles Kiproy

**A**H! let this music never cease,  
The throbbing viol and the flute,  
Do we not dance together now?  
Let other thoughts be mute.

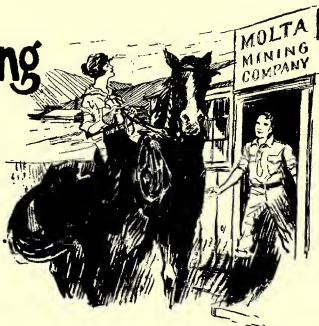
Drain every cup of glistening wine  
And let our laughter fill the halls. . . .  
The shadows of the spluttering candles  
Sink against the walls.

Outside the quiet stars look down  
Upon a world that waits the dawn,  
Within, the dancers wheel and spin  
Still dancing on and on.



# Vanishing Gold

By  
Clarence L.  
Andrews



## CHAPTER I.

THE spink of cracked glass, followed by the vicious spat of metal striking wood, came without warning. An infinitesimal fraction of time before these tragic sounds broke the stillness, the man at Barney Donovan's desk inclined his head to look for a slip of paper which had strayed far back beneath the hood; otherwise the bit of death-dealing lead would not have struck the wall.

As official assayer for the Molta Mining Company, Barney Donovan usually busied himself at that desk at that hour of the evening. To-night he was in town, and Bart Carson, the mine superintendent, was searching through the contents while waiting Donovan's return.

Had those sounds startled the ears of a man less wary than Carson, he might have glanced up in surprise. But to him that ominous signal smacked of older, bolder days—a forerunner of serious trouble. Keeping his face close

to the desk top, he snapped off the light; then jerking an automatic from a drawer he tiptoed to the window through which the bullet had entered.

When his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, he made out a jagged hole in one of the lower panes. The window faced south. One hundred yards away, and that many feet lower than the office, flowed Littlesnake Creek. Although there was no moon, the clear night rendered objects distinguishable for quite a distance, yet an intent study of the creek-bottom shadows failed to reveal anything unusual.

The front door faced east. He moved stealthily to his left and opened it. Without crossing the threshold he listened for telltale sounds; all he heard was the croaking of frogs in a pool west of the office, and the faint rumble of stamps at the mill a quarter of a mile up the cañon.

He closed the door and turned to the middle one of three doors which pierced the inner wall. On his right

was the assayer's bedroom; on his left was the laboratory and furnace room. He opened the middle door, behind which was a closet containing the assay safe. Not two hours earlier both he and Barney had weighed, checked, and stored one hundred thousand dollars' worth of gold bars in that safe. He groped for the bolt lever and tested it; it resisted his effort, and he was satisfied.

He retraced his steps to the front door. Out on the tiny front porch he paused; some one who used a strong pipe had just been at that spot or was lurking very close. The odor was such as an inveterate pipe smoker would have about his clothing.

A lantern bobbed up and down a short distance up the path as the night watchman approached from the mill. Carson did not wait; instead he faced north and passed around the building, halting at each corner, alert, distrustful. Before he had completed the round he heard the watchman stamp across the porch. The next moment the brilliant glow of an incandescent lamp supplanted the lantern's puny glimmer within the office.

The watchman filled and lighted a service-blackened corncob pipe; then settled back in the assayer's chair with an air of comfort. Carson eyed him speculatively through the broken window.

Tall, loose-jointed, sour of face and disposition, with mottled gray eyes almost as dead as his gnarled trigger finger, "Cyanide Bill" Sutter was of that type of taciturn guardians who shoot first and talk at the inquest.

A grim, set look crept into Carson's face as he saw the watchman stare around the office in an attitude of listening. He began to wonder if Sutter had heard the shot; if so, the crafty grin on his seamed features betrayed anything else than official concern.

Carson pondered the situation; un-

accountable accidents, of which the mysterious shot was the most recent, had been occurring with strange frequency of late. One thing only prevented him from attributing the shot to an enemy bent upon revenge—the assay safe contained the largest shipment of gold bullion on record for the Molta Company, and it was due out on the morning stage.

And yet, all angles considered, revenge presented the most likely reason, for the mine crews had no love for their superintendent. Just why was an unanswered question, though many surmised that he lacked personality—that indefinable quality which is essential in men of authority.

His latest clash had been with Barney Donovan that morning; only for the opportune appearance of Emily Carson, his daughter, the quarrel would have ended in blows.

Barney, who was twenty-six, had boarded with Carson and his daughter for more than a year, and no good-looking, well-bred young man can daily associate with a lady of lesser years, whose admirable qualities include beauty, charm, and cooking, and not escape the inevitable results.

Secretly, Carson did not approve of the match, but he never expressed his opinion openly until Barney pointed out some dubious features in the semianual mine report. Then Carson had flown into a towering rage. He was even unwise enough to drag the intimate friendship of Barney and Emily into the quarrel when Barney bested him in the original argument.

"Stay clear of my house, and don't let me catch you near my daughter from this time on!" Carson had yelled.

Easy-going Barney held his temper and tried cajolery. Carson, on the contrary, became more angry, and began to hurl abusive epithets beyond human endurance.

"If it's the last thing I ever do, I'll



make you regret those words before I leave here!" declared Barney, thoroughly aroused.

"No, you won't; you leave at once!" shouted Carson just as his daughter entered the assay office.

Later, after a stormy session between Emily and her father, the latter made a peace offering by retracting his last words. Barney rather sullenly agreed to stay, but announced that especial business would take him to Molta after supper.

As the incident revived itself in Carson's thoughts, two questions disturbed him; was Barney responsible for the shot, or was the shot intended for Barney? The latter conjecture was highly improbable. In fact, the open preference which a majority of the miners held for the young assayer was one cause of Carson's wrathful outburst.

Retrospectively Carson turned back to a time, five years previous, when no man had stood higher than himself in the esteem of his fellow miners. That was before the big slide, when he was merely shift boss. Afterward puzzling changes had been instituted.

"Buffalo" Hogan, the former superintendent, bought out Molta City's largest saloon and gambling hall; Carson succeeded him as mine superintendent, while "Pap" Krause, sole survivor of the slide victims, became a childish, vacant-minded recluse, living in one of the company cabins, but secretly supported by Carson.

Hypothetical reasons for this were legion, and, like Nature's eternal lava pots, slumbered for indefinite intervals, only to burst with fresh upheavals of gossip whenever Carson had trouble with his crews.

The general feeling found open expression through Bud Hardy, veteran mine foreman on the night shift. Bud resented and ignored Carson's orders repeatedly. The latter's patience remained in check until an accident oc-

curred, seemingly as a result of the disobedience; then Bud was discharged without ceremony.

In leaving, the irate foreman shook his fist in Carson's face, shouting: "You fire me for this stingy little breakdown, but you forget you were made super after you'd buried a dozen good men and ducked to save your yellow hide!"

From that moment matters had taken a decided turn for the worse. Hardy was popular, both in town and at the mine, and his friends began to show their resentment in countless furtive ways—rocks falling from unthought-of places; timbers dropping without cause or warning; deadly live wires dangling in unlighted levels through which Carson sometimes passed; lastly a shot at his back!

Suddenly Carson stiffened, his mind recalled to the present by Sutter's actions. A dozen rapid strides took him to the porch and into the office, where he found the closet door open and Sutter squatting in front of the safe.

The watchman rose to his feet, meeting Carson's glare without an outward sign of uneasiness.

"Is there anything about that safe particularly interesting to you, Cyanide?" demanded Carson.

"Bart, yo' words is tame," drawled Sutter after a pause, "but the way yuh says 'em is pizen. If yo' conscience aint a painin' yuh none, why get riled 'f I look tuh see if any mice has gnawed a hole in the safe?"

The corners of Carson's mouth whitened perceptibly, a strange light flickered in his eyes. Cyanide calmly closed the middle door, picked up his lantern, and started to leave.

"Did you hear a shot about thirty minutes ago?" asked Carson in an off-hand tone.

"Shot! Whar?"

Carson was positive Cyanide's eyes darted to the broken window.

"Can't say just where; I thought I heard one myself, that is all," he replied.

Cyanide grunted and walked out.

Carson tried the safe door once more; then examined the wall back of Barney's desk. His investigation led him into the laboratory, where he found the bullet lodged in the ceiling, its course indicating that it had been fired from the creek bottom.

By means of a chair and a table he was able to reach and extract the bullet, which was not so badly mutilated that its size could not be determined. His mustached lip exposed his teeth in an expression of cruel joy; the leaden missile was a .41, and Barney Donovan possessed the only gun of that caliber in Malta.

He would have made an immediate search of Barney's room had not the clop-clop of galloping hoofs reached his ears. He seated himself at the desk and waited with deadly patience.

Barney entered a few minutes later. His ill humor had vanished; in its stead lurked a sheepish look, the expression of a man who, though ashamed of some unmanly act, is uncertain as to the reception of his apology. Carson, misconstruing the look, eyed him narrowly.

"Did you think I'd dug out altogether?" greeted Barney, dumping an armload of bundles on the desk. "It took me longer than I expected. Here's one letter for you and a note; some fellow stopped me when I was leaving and asked me to hand it to you."

Carson accepted the missives in silence. He read the note first; then, cramming it in his pocket, he opened the letter. Barney, busy at putting away his purchases, heard Carson curse in a venomous fashion.

"Bad news?" he asked, good-naturedly inquisitive.

Carson glowered. Barney took the hint and passed into his bedroom.

"Barney, ship the bullion for me in the morning. Shipping memo's all  
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ready in the middle drawer. I'm taking the midnight train for Frisco. It seems that everybody is out to get me, so I'm going to do some getting of my own!" Rasping this combined order and threat at the astonished Barney, Carson yanked the outer door open and vanished into the darkness.

## CHAPTER II.

ECHOES of the morning whistle, flung back from massed ranks of pine-studded, dawn-lit hills, had hardly ceased reverberating when the mail stage honked into camp.

Barney, rubbing the second nap from his eyes, scuffed into the office to greet the express guards. A cross-fire of hilarious bantering ensued, after which Barney produced the shipping book and disappeared in the closet.

Sutter entered in the meantime and began to converse with the messengers; Cyanide seldom came near mine or offices when off watch, but the unusualness of his present visit was not remarked.

Within the closet there were sounds of matches being struck, of objects moved hastily about; those outside heard Barney swear.

"'Smatter, Barney—peevied?" called one messenger.

Sutter's eyes glittered.

Barney catapulted from the closet.

"And who wouldn't be peevied? The safe is cleaned!" he cried.

Two pairs of eyes bulged in amazement. Sutter's face remained expressionless. The messengers crowded forward to view the empty safe.

"Been tampered with?" queried one.

"Not so's you can see it; the combination worked O. K.," replied Barney.

"Aw, some fellow cracked it while you was pounding your ear," declared the other messenger.

"Impossible! The safe's hooked up

to a burglar alarm that would wake a dead man, and I cut it in just before I went to bed. Bart stayed here while I was in town, and Cyanide punches the porch clock every hour!" exclaimed Barney.

"Did you notice anything wrong last night, Cyanide?" he asked, turning to the watchman.

"Nary a wrong. I wuz up here twict an hour an' didn't see a soul but yuh an' Bart," drawled Sutter.

"Maybe the thief came at it from below," suggested the first messenger.

"No chance; that closet has a concrete floor two feet thick," explained Barney. "You can see for yourselves; there isn't a crack in it."

"That's a fact, sure enough," agreed the other, adding: "Well, I guess your box is a dead one this trip, so we'll ramble. It's tough luck and no fooling. So long!"

After the stage disappeared in a cloud of dust, Barney spent twenty minutes in researching the safe closet and examining the exterior of the cabin. Sutter moved in and out, apparently engaged in an investigation of his own.

Barney finally stepped to the telephone, first notifying the company headquarters, then passing word to the local sheriff to come out at once.

"May the saints protect us when the Old Man gets the news," he breathed as he hung up.

Barney had reference to Isaiah Midleman, president of the Molta Company, and Sutter, who had been listening, started to say something.

"Hoo-hoo, Bar-nee!" hailed a voice from without.

Barney made a quick gesture for silence, hurrying outside as he did so. An animated pinto pranced from side to side in front of the steps; seated in the saddle and swaying to the pinto's movements was one whose voice would have drawn Barney over trackless sea and desert in faithful obedience.

Though no one realized it except Barney, he might have been holding a job at a thousand more per year but for Emily Carson's expressive hazel eyes.

"Good morning, Emmy," he greeted her, permitting the pinto to nose at his pockets.

"Say, Barney, I've a good scolding stored up for you. Here I've waited breakfast a whole hour and you didn't come. Just to punish you I'm going to make you wait till I've given Goo-goo his morning run; he'll—" The pinto reared in thrilling circus fashion. "Of all the lovinest crazy animals! I'll be gone—a few minutes."

The last words wafted back to Barney from a confused blur of flying heels, waving tail, billowing dust.

"Pfwhere be the boss?"

The brogue-tinged question brought Barney's mind back to earth; he turned to see Scanlon, the mine foreman, on the porch behind him. Sutter had gone.

"Bart's gone to Frisco, Scanlon; anything I can do for you?"

"Oi were wonderin' if the boss hired annybody to take Windy Tuttle's place on the lower stope."

"What's wrong with Tuttle?"

"The boss fired him yisterday. Only half his crew rayported this mornin', an' they be drunker than a brew'ry cat. Oi were dommed glad for to see that human air compressor go, but we be gettin' the best ore from the lower stope an' yez can't afford to leave it idle."

When deeply perplexed Barney always poked a pencil through his hair, hair that was curly and blond, though some might have dared to call it red. He manipulated his pencil for fully two minutes, then stepped to the telephone. An afterthought caused him to turn back without taking the receiver down.

"Take a crew from some other level, Scanlon, and get along till Bart comes back. Use your own judgment; I'll stand responsible for the order."

Scanlon accepted Barney's suggestion with a look of relief and hastened back to the shaft house. Barney seated himself on the porch, and for a time was lost in troubled thought. Later he procured a flash lamp from his room and spent nearly half an hour reexamining the safe and the closet. The sheriff's car arrived while he was still in the closet, but he failed to hear it. More puzzled than ever, he slid back into the office on his knees and mopped the sweat from his face.

"I wonder if I'm spoofy or am I just somebody's goat. I'll——" His soliloquy ended as he sighted the sheriff, who stood in the doorway.

"Why, hello, Hemmerson!" he called to him, ashamed because he had been caught talking to himself.

"How-dee, Donovan," responded the sheriff. "What appears to be the trouble?"

"Well, Hemmerson, it's what has disappeared that is responsible for my present trouble——" Barney paused.

"Hit the house pretty hard, eh? I met the stage down the line; they told me it was a hundred thousand."

"Yes, the stage was waiting to take it down when I discovered the loss."

"Where's Carson?"

"On his way to Frisco."

"Are you sure of that?"

Barney rose and regarded the sheriff in surprise.

"I know that he told me he was going down on the midnight train; I can ask the night operator," he replied, advancing to the phone.

Hemmerson voiced no objection, but showed deep interest in the one-sided conversation which followed. Barney fell to penciling his hair when he hung up.

"The night operator says Windy Tuttle was the only passenger going south at midnight," he announced in a troubled voice.

Hemmerson stared at the broken

window for a moment, then asked: "Have you any idea why Bart went to Frisco?"

Barney shook his head.

"Did anything happen before he left?"

Barney reluctantly told of what had taken place the previous day and evening. Before he finished the auto stage from Molta arrived. Its lone passenger, a hulking, dark-featured man, came toward the assay office. As he stepped upon the porch Barney and Hemmerson favored him with inquiring glances.

"I want to see Carson," announced the stranger.

"Carson is out of town. Is your business urgent?" Barney's reply was civil, though he mentally declared the man to be a compatible teammate for Cyanide Bill.

"Yes—I'm Knucker, the new superintendent. I've orders from Middleman to take charge at once."

Barney was surprised into silence. In the sensitive balance of his mind's scales he weighed the stranger, at the same time sifting the news that spelled Carson's discharge.

"Carson's in San Francisco; he won't be back for a day or two at least," he vouchsafed. The scales had caught their balance; Carson swung the lower beam, Knucker dangled high at the opposite end.

"Any fit place to stop around here?" demanded Knucker.

"You will find the boarding house open."

Without seeming to notice Barney's curtness, Knucker set out in the direction indicated by Barney's pointing finger. As he swaggered up the path the other two watched him uncompromisingly.

"He ain't much on gentle looks," commented Hemmerson.

"Not on your flea bite!" sniffed Barney contemptuously.

Then he frowned.

Knucker had halted and was ogling the splendid picture of horsemanship as Emily and her pinto came charging down the mill road. With a wave and a smile for Barney she cried as she galloped past: "Come to your breakfast, slow poke!"

Knucker was not so far away as to prevent the expressions of his face from being read by Barney; far more than admiration was registered in the coarse, brutal features.

Barney watched until Emily passed from sight beyond the cabins. He saw Knucker loiter near the Carson cabin an unreasonably long time—even staring back over his shoulder when he moved on to the boarding house.

"How was Bart dressed when he left you?" inquired Hemmerson, anxious to reopen the interrupted subject.

"Same old outfit—laced boots, mole-skin trousers, brown flannel shirt, gray sombrero; you seldom find him dressed any other way."

"Was this the note you brought him last night?"

Barney recognized the paper which Hemmerson held out; its scrawly address would have identified it anywhere. He nodded, a question in his eyes.

"Who gave it to you?"

"I'm paralyzed if I can tell. I was heading out Main Street way when a fellow hollered my name; he handed me the note and told me it was for Bart. He hustled away so fast I couldn't recognize him in the darkness; besides I was in a tearing big hurry myself. Anything wrong?"

"Read the note and see," suggested Hemmerson.

Barney opened the soiled sheet and read:

All set. Slip me your tip and we go to it. If you telephone, say Fool's Gold.

UNO.

"What do you make of it?" asked

Hemmerson as a pencil point began to shuttle through Barney's hair.

"Who is—where did you find it?"

"Where the mail stage was held up on its down trip this morning."

### CHAPTER III.

BARNEY backed against the wall as if thrust there by an invisible hand. "What was taken?" he managed to ask.

"Nothing. Two masked men turned the trick at the Narrows; from what the messengers told me, the pair expected the bullion box and were wilder than bobcats when they didn't find it."

The telephone bell interrupted. It proved to be Middleman calling from company headquarters in San Francisco. In reply to the president's request Barney told what Carson had said about going to the city on the midnight train.

"Well, he didn't get here on it; I made it a point to meet the train!" declared the irate official.

Barney felt an inexplicable tightening at his throat as he passed this news to Hemmerson. The sheriff listened without comment, and after inspecting the safe, as well as each means of ingress to the cabin, he hurried back to Molta.

Shortly after Hemmerson's departure Emily came down from the cabins and demanded of Barney an explanation of his unprecedented tardiness. He attempted to efface his troubled look by a wan smile while he made an equivocal excuse. He would have gone to his long-overdue breakfast had there been any one about to guard the office in his absence.

"You don't happen to know what called your father away last night, do you?" he asked.

"Nothing more than what he said in a note which I found on the kitchen table this morning."

"What did it say?"

Emily did not answer at once; her eyes were on the broken window.

"It said"—she nibbled at her lip, then turned her eyes full at him—"something about important business that would keep him away several days."

"Do you know how he went?" persisted Barney.

"I don't really know, but he must have walked or taken the stage. His horse is in the corral, and he didn't change his clothes, so he cannot have gone far; but why catechize me so?"

"Have you heard?"—Barney was on the verge of announcing Knucker's arrival, but could not bring himself to utter the words—"that there's some difficulty in the mine that needs his attention?" he finished lamely.

Emily's eyes, now wide, with just a glint of horror in them, were staring at the telltale hole above Barney's desk. He, in turn, failed to notice her expression; a far-away look filmed his eyes as he gazed toward the mill, visible through the open door.

Emily stepped to the furnace-room door and glanced inside. When she withdrew her head, Barney observed a baffling look in her face; all rich color had fled from her cheeks.

"What's the matter, Emmy—are you sick?"

"Will you loan-me your revolver, Barney?" she asked, ignoring his question. "I'm going to amuse myself at target practice while papa is away."

"Surest thing you know," cried Barney, glad of some chance to please her.

He disappeared into his room, returning a moment later with a heavy, long-barreled six-shooter and a box of cartridges.

"There you are; hope you make a bull's-eye every shot. I'll get more shells when these are gone."

Emily accepted the weapon in silence, examining it with an air of familiarity as she moved to the door.

"Well, are you coming to breakfast or not?" she asked from the doorway.

"No, it's most too late now; make it two in one at noontime," suggested Barney, advancing to her side.

He reached for her free hand, but she evaded the move by stepping from the porch. Again both were silent.

"Barney, I'm disappointed in you!" she suddenly flung over her shoulder, then sped away up the path.

Barney's hand automatically fished a pencil from his pocket while he tried to fit her parting declaration to something he had or had not done. When he could no longer see her he turned back to his desk.

At noontime he found her in a more friendly mood, though her enigmatic questions gave him food for uneasy thought throughout the afternoon.

The mid-afternoon stage brought the company's special detectives, Harper and Simms. Barney welcomed them in the mood he imagined he would have felt in the presence of his own executors.

The detectives lost no time in getting to their task. Barney answered their ceaseless questions as best he could, giving them full benefit of his meager knowledge concerning the robbery itself.

After an exhaustive search of the interior of the cabin the trio proceeded outside. Nothing escaped Harper's eyes, and Barney gave him the information he requested by pointing out different trails and buildings in sight.

Directly west of the office, they came to the brink of an arroyo. Between rainy seasons this arroyo was dry, except for a pool of slime-covered water, cut off from Littlesnake Creek by a wide gravel bar. The west bank was considerably lower than the spot where the men were standing. Beyond the arroyo a cabin roof was visible amid clumps of chaparral and scrub oak.

"And who might live there?" asked Harper, pointing.

"Old Pap Krause," answered Barney.

"What's his business?"

"Just existing. He's been a keen old chap in his day, but only half baked now. He was in the big slide a few years back. They say it was the company's fault, and to square themselves they deeded him some dead land with a cabin on it, then let it ride at that."

"Is he dangerous?"

"Not at all—harmless as a babe. Carson's daughter helps him, and he thinks the world of her, but he don't seem to shine up to her dad much. He's pretty rational as a rule; sometimes his mind flops over and he isn't heard from for days at a stretch."

Harper, releasing his breath in a long, noisy exhalation, surveyed the scene in silence.

The evening whistle boomed its signal, and the three turned back to the office. Sutter came down the path as they entered; leaving him to watch the office, Barney accompanied the detectives to the boarding house.

After introducing them to the boarding boss as mine inspectors, he set out for Carson's cabin. On the way he sighted Knucker in close conversation with Scanlon and the night mine foreman. Both day and night mill foremen were in the group also.

At the supper table Emily's quietness and reserve caused Barney to wonder if she had heard of the robbery yet. He lingered a long time after the supper dishes were cleared away; then, gathering his courage, he told her of the morning discovery—all but the note.

Emily pondered a moment before replying, her eyes downcast, the color rising and ebbing in her cheeks. The news had not leaked out as yet, and came as a shock to her.

"Barney, are you going to be un-

grateful enough to hint that papa took that gold, especially after you've tried to injure him—or was murder your intention?"

Emily's tone was throaty, vibrant with hurt surprise. Barney sat up in his chair with a start.

"Was murder my intention!" he echoed. "Say, Emmy, I'll admit that queer bugs ramble through my intelligence plant occasionally, but do you really call it attempted murder on my part when I simply obey a law of nature and refuse to let your dad choke me as he tried——"

"I admit that you were justified in protecting yourself then, but there was no excuse for your sneaking behind his back and shooting at him like a coward!"

"Shoot at him—what's the answer, Emmy? I haven't shot at anything for so long I've forgotten what powder smells like. What makes you——"

Emily's gesture was imperious as she spread a note before Barney's eyes.

EMILY: I'll be gone a few days on important business. Keep a sharp eye on young Donovan; he tried to get even by shooting me in the back. You can see the bullet hole over his desk. I'll attend to him when I get back.

DAD.

Barney skimmed over the note, re-read it more slowly, then looked up, smiling queerly.

"Hadrn't we better let it ride until he does return?" he asked.

"You don't deny it, then!"

Emily's lips tightened, her eyes flashed.

"Why should I even attempt to deny such a far-fetched accusation as that?"

For answer Emily leaped to her feet and stepped to a shelf near the door. When she returned to the table she laid Barney's six-shooter in front of him, also an empty cartridge.

"I'm the blumest guesser in the world, Emmy," smiled Barney. "What's the answer?"

"The answer! Oh, I might have known you'd say that; a man who shoots like a coward is bound to be too cowardly to own up to his tricks!" declared Emily passionately. "The answer is, you stood in the creek last night when papa was good enough to sit up while you went to town, and when you got a good chance at his back you tried to kill him; the mark of your bullet is over your desk and in the ceiling of the furnace room. You left the empty shell where you stood, then it seems you were cunning enough to reload and have a box of cartridges handy with only six shells missing. And to think I've trusted you all these months and treated you as my own brother and——"

Tears began to rise, unbidden, to the surface with the last words; she paused to check them.

Barney traced an aimless trail through his hair and inspected the empty cartridge to discover that it was a duplicate of those in the weapon. He rolled it back and forth on the table with two fingers, deliberating upon an answer. His decision reached, he prepared to leave.

"I've an idea, Emmy, that if we let this subject rest till we've had a night's sleep we can come to a rational understanding. Keep the evidence you have; explanations won't help me just now. I was—anyway, I'll see you at breakfast time."

Emily caught her breath to protest as the door closed behind him. Then she gave way to woman's greatest panacea for soul burdens—tears.

The night watchman was in earnest conversation with Harper and Simms when Barney entered the assay office, but hurried out at once as if desirous of avoiding him. He would have gone directly to his room had not the detectives detained him with more questions. As soon as he dared he excused himself, saying: "I'm dead tired, fel-

lows; I'll roll in now and see you all in the morning."

Scarcely had he latched the bedroom door than sounds of an auto approaching at high speed reached him. Brakes screeched under the strain of a sudden stop; some one struck the porch in a jump, bursting unceremoniously into the office.

"Where's Donovan?" demanded a deep bass voice.

"Hello, Hemmerson! What'll you have?" greeted Barney, reopening his door.

"Just a word with you—in private."

Barney, startled, uneasy, beckoned the sheriff into the bedroom. The instant the door closed Hemmerson produced a massive, bone-handled six-shooter.

"Ever see this gun before?"

Barney gulped and nodded.

"It's—Bart's," he admitted in a half whisper.

"You are sure of that?"

Again Barney nodded, his lips shaping themselves to say: "Why?"

"Bud Hardy has been murdered; shot in the back. I picked this gun up ten paces from his body!"

#### CHAPTER IV.

THE sheriff's words were distinct enough, but Barney had to mouth them, parrot fashion, in his bewilderment. His hand strayed to the pencil holder.

"I was headed home for the night when I heard the shot," explained Hemmerson. "Hardy was at Hogan's joint all evening, sopping up the ugly juice and shouting about how wild Carson was because he, Hardy, had busted the super's job. They say Hardy staggered out the back way declaring he'd show Bart up still more before he was done. The gun barked two minutes later. When I got to the alley where it happened Hardy was dead. I stepped



on this gun before I reached him. See for yourself; one shell is empty. The gun was hot when I picked it up."

"Maybe somebody else borrowed or stole the gun," interposed Barney.

"Such a thing could happen, but how about this? It was clutched in Hardy's right hand!"

Hemmerson held out a horsehair chain, a nugget charm, and Carson's watch attached to it. The watch crystal was gone, the hands twisted.

"God, Hemmerson!" groaned Barney. "Isn't there some chance of proving that a mistake has been made? This will be— What will become of Emmy?"

Hemmerson, preoccupied by his own deductions, pulled at his ear lobe without replying. At length he pocketed the gun and watch, then left the bedroom.

Halting at the outer door, he called back: "I came near forgetting—found one of your men down the road a ways too drunk to walk. I gave him a lift; he's out in my machine. Hello, here he is on the porch!"

Barney gazed past Hemmerson and saw Windy Tuttle swaying drunkenly in the light of the open door.

"One of the devil's own, you mean!" snorted Barney, adding: "This man is responsible for nine-eighths of our trouble at the mine; he's a dirty bootlegger. I'm betting he's loaded with booze right now, outside and inside both!"

Hemmerson seized the inebriate by the collar and yanked him into the office, searching his pockets thoroughly. A pocket knife, some small change, a six-shooter, and a quart bottle containing a small quantity of whisky constituted Windy's possessions.

The sheriff evinced keen interest in the gun, and Windy, released from the none too gentle grip, slumped grotesquely to the floor. Barney's face bore a nauseated look as he watched the act.

"Now, if this shooting iron was a .45, things might perk up for Bart," vouchsafed Hemmerson. "Although one of these chambers is empty, it's a .44; Hardy was killed with a .45. Besides"—he sniffed at the muzzle—"this blunderbuss ain't been fired anyways soon from the smell."

The mention of the weapon's caliber excited Barney's instant attention; it was an exact counterpart of the gun he had loaned Emily that morning. He said nothing, however, but scrutinized Windy with smoldering eyes.

"Well, Donovan, do what you like with Tuttle's exhibits; I've got to be moving back. I'll see you later," announced Hemmerson, leaping into his car.

After the sheriff's departure Harper, Simms, and Barney regarded the besotted miner with varied expressions of disgust. Barney returned the knife and change to Windy's pockets; the bottle of brain disturber he smashed against the porch steps; the gun he carefully hid in his own room. Lastly, he took firm hold on Windy's shoulders, dragging him out into the open like a log of wood. He was sorely tempted to shove his whisky-soaked burden over into the slime-covered pool; instead, he left him lying in a patch of wire grass.

Back in his bedroom, he turned out the light and flung himself on the bed to marshal his thoughts into some semblance of order. A mumbling conversation between Harper and Simms continued an hour, much to his annoyance; then they left. Some time afterward maudlin voices passed the assay office outward bound. One hiccupping remark reminded Barney of Tuttle, and he breathed a profane wish anent Windy's eternal future.

At dawn he leaped to his feet, surprised to find that he had fallen asleep without disrobing. No one came near the assay office until long after the

whistle blew; in consequence he was again late for breakfast.

When he reached the Carson cabin, he found Emily watering her pinto and her father's pony. Pity wrung his heart as he noted her red and swollen eyelids.

"And how's every little thing this morning?" he asked cheerfully.

Emily shook her head, not daring to speak; unabated tears lurked too close to the surface.

Attributing her silence to her suspicions, he tried to frame a question that lay closest to his heart. Before he could utter a word he saw her eyes widen and stare at some object behind him. Turning, he discovered Knucker's swarthy face leering at her from the opposite side of the corral.

Instinctive rage banished all other worries from Barney's mind. He would have enjoyed heaving a rock at the grinning stranger.

"Who is he?" whispered Emily.

"That"—contemptuously—"is supposed to be your father's better; calls himself Knucker, the new superintendent."

Without an eyelash quivering, Emily gazed full into the newcomer's face. Knucker bowed and mumbled, "Good morning," but her eyes never wavered.

Notwithstanding a natural twinge of jealousy, Barney watched with interest; no impertinent masher had yet been seen around Molta who could withstand Emily's scathing stare. Once convinced that she was picked as a masher's victim, her hazel eyes became batteries of withering fire.

But, unlike the uncultured roughness of miners or the flippantly rude advances of occasional strangers, Knucker stood in a class distinctly separate from all others. In his brutish domain sacred right was tabooed, purity was dross.

Barney saw Emily's cheeks flame—not the delicate mantling of a blush, but

a deep, dull-red signal of anger. He dared not trust himself to look at Knucker. Gently taking the pail from her hand, he urged in a low voice: "Come into the kitchen; I've something to tell you."

She yielded to the pressure of Barney's hand at her elbow, and turned toward the cabin, her pinto nickering his hurt surprise at not receiving a farewell pat.

Knucker watched the two enter the kitchen; then, with an evil chuckle, he set out for the mill office.

While Emily prepared breakfast in silence, Barney withdrew to a corner and lifted a snow-white cat from his favorite chair, giving deposed tabby the benefit of his lap.

For a time he stroked the cat without speaking. Too blunt to be tactful, too truthful to be secretive, he debated long before taking up the disagreeable subject. He began by telling her the so-far unofficial information that her father was superseded by Knucker. He fought shy of mentioning the holdup or the murder; yet he realized that if he did not inform her of those calamities there were neighbors who thrived on such morbid gossip.

Furtively he watched her move from stove to table and back; then, with a deep sigh, gripped his courage for the plunge.

"Emmy, about how much bad news can you stand all at once?"

A stove lid dropped, clattering, ringing, to the floor. White-faced, lifter in hand, she whirled to face him.

He could not meet her eyes. Slowly stroking the cat, he continued: "What would you do if they should find indisputable evidence against your father, both for murder and robbery?"

"Oh, don't sit like a block of wood and keep me in suspense!" she managed to scold hysterically.

Barney groped for suitable words.

"Barney Donovan, don't you dare put me off another minute!"

Emily stamped her foot and nearly tore her apron as she twisted its corners in her agitation.

Then Barney told her of the note, the stage holdup, the murder of Hardy, the damning evidence which Hemmerson had secured, and which pointed to Carson as the guilty man.

Emily seemed to shrivel under the blow. The kitchen clock's ticking sounded loud above the muffled roar of stamps. Tabby purred as if no sorrow were near, digging her foreclaws into Barney's thigh to express her enjoyment. The wood fire snapped and cracked in the semistillness.

With one forefinger pressed against her teeth, a gesture of hers which always preluded an outburst of anguish, Emily sank into a chair. Suddenly she cast herself forward upon the table and burst into a storm of violent sobbing.

Atremble in sympathy, Barney brushed the cat from his lap and stepped to her side.

"Oh, I begged papa to leave this hateful old mine when mamma 'died,'" sobbed Emily. "I've lived in such dread lately, and my dreams have been terrible. Papa owes somebody a lot of money; he's always hard pressed for enough to meet his payments. The last few days he's been so glum I couldn't sleep for worrying about him. And that Bud Hardy has been just as spiteful as he could be. If that letter you brought papa was a notice of dismissal, there's no telling; he might have felt so desperate as to take the gold in revenge. But I'm sure he wouldn't kill anybody—unless—maybe Bud Hardy attacked him and he had to shoot to save himself. Oh—it's—just—awful!"

Another storm of grief checked her words.

Barney patted her shoulders.

"I sure hated to say a word, Emmy; but you'd 'a' found it out from the neighbors after a while, and I thought it best you should know right away."

Her sobs grew in volume.

"If you'll just come down with me to the minister's, I'll be able to step in and take care of you; nobody will dare abuse my wife——"

Emily straightened as suddenly as she had collapsed.

"Barney Donovan"—dashing the tears from her eyes—"if you are willing to help me, do so like a man; but don't be thinking I'm so helpless I've got to marry to protect myself."

Barney stared, hurt, dumfounded.

"Why, I wouldn't marry the best man alive while this disgrace is upon papa and me," she declared proudly. "If you are the friend you profess to be, get out and show it—prove papa absolutely innocent before you dare talk marriage to me!"

As an added fling she continued: "And you haven't proved to me yet that you did not try to shoot papa in the back yourself!"

Barney offered no reply; he was dazed. Unconsciously he turned upon his heel and walked out without a word of parting. He was not angry; his was that deep-rooted soul hurt which comes to those whose honest intentions are spurned or misinterpreted.

At the assay office, he again met Knucker, who inquired for Carson. Barney's reply was a cool negative. Knucker departed, and the two detectives put in an appearance. From them Barney learned that not a footprint, finger mark, or wheel track had been discovered that would indicate how or where the bullion had been taken.

But much was being gathered from statements of the miners that added a sinister light to the already overwhelming evidence against Carson.

Also, Middleman had received a mysterious telephone call from some one

who offered to reveal the stolen cache if granted twenty thousand dollars and immunity from arrest.

Middleman made a vain attempt to keep his caller in conversation until he was located. Subsequent inquiries showed that the stranger had called from one of the bay shore cities and that he was tall and dressed like a miner or a rancher.

Barney shut himself in the furnace room to think. He fought hard to repel the suspicion that knocked insistently for admission. Could it be that Carson was really playing a deep, crafty game by which he meant to profit both in money and liberty?

At the end of an hour he threw down the crucible he was cleaning and went into the office.

"If the law can't prove Bart's innocence, Barney Donovan will!" he muttered.

Then he telephoned to the shaft house and asked that Scanlon be sent to him.

## CHAPTER V.

**W**HAT'S your opinion of Bart Scanlon, Scanlon?" Barney asked when the two were closeted in Barney's room.

"There wasn't a finer man in the outfit than him whin he were shift boss."

Barney indulged in a slight smile at the evasion.

"What queered him with the men? Did they get sore just because he was promoted?"

"There's been many a rumor, lad; but one av the raysons for Mike Scanlon not havin' a scab on his nose is his delicate raygard for things that be none av his business."

Barney smiled broadly this time, a confident smile born of his judgment of the cautious foreman. Scanlon liked Barney above all other men at the mine—and Barney knew it. For that reason he learned much concerning the

mine's mysterious past history before another hour elapsed.

"An' Oi'm tellin' ye, lad, 'tis Buffalo Hogan yez must buzz about the slide. Buffalo's got a thumb holt on mighty near ivery old-timer around Molta, except Mike Scanlon, an' Buffalo be knowin' that Oi kape me mouth shut for the good av me soul."

"And, Mike," breathed Barney, "for the good of Emily's soul and her dad's, as well as mine, I'll keep my own mouth closed and my eyes and ears wide open."

"Oi believe ye, lad, an' Oi'll tell yez somethin' more; that Knucker man has worked here afore now, or Oi've niver said the truth in all me life. Yez asked me for the names av them that was kilt; if the timekeeper has the old raycords Oi can pick 'em out. There was one chap, a mucker, Oi'm rememb'rin', they niver did find."

"All right, Scanlon; we'll make for the timekeeper the minute the watchman shows up here again. And if you have nothing important on the slate for to-night I wish you'd stick around in my place until I get back."

Scanlon gave willing assent, and at the watchman's appearance both started for the mine office. The timekeeper was doubtful as to having the information as old as Barney wanted, but he obligingly made a search of an obscure filing case. Fortunately the pay-roll records for the past six years were still intact, and Scanlon was soon running a calloused, blue-nailed forefinger down a column of names.

"There were fourteen, countin' Bart, in that level the day she slid," he explained as he checked off the names his memory recalled. "Part av the crew were stoppin' overhand from the face av the drift when the timberin' began to settle. Bart he rushed the gang in with all the extra timbers handy, then headed for the main shaft on the run to order more. He hadn't

run tin yarrds afore the hull thirteen were buried without a bit av warnin'—an' they do be tellin' since that Buffalo had warned Bart to kape away from that level altogether.

"Annyway, Old Pap were the only one alive av the dozen we found; they niver did find this chap's body."

Scanlon thumped his work-hardened finger on the name "Jim Kerr" with increased emphasis in each tap as he shot a meaning look at Barney.

Satisfied with his encouraging start, Barney hurried back to the assay office. Throughout the forenoon his brain was a mine of plans in itself. When he went to dinner, Emily was so moody and quiet the meal would have been a dismal affair but for his busy thoughts. Even his announcement that he would not be in for supper did not draw more than a listless "Very well" from her lips.

The evening whistle brought Scanlon promptly to the assay office, and Barney, his pony saddled and waiting, lost no time in getting away.

In town, he went direct to the depot. Very little of the night operator's information was helpful, however, and, after stabling his pony, Barney strolled to other places he had in mind. At long intervals he sauntered in and out of Hogan's saloon, hoping to catch a glimpse of its famous proprietor. In this he failed; Buffalo was presiding over the nightly games no longer permitted to run openly.

That was a phase of mining-life recreation that Barney was little versed in, nor did he care to be; therefore he made no attempt to visit the gaming rooms.

On one of his calls at the saloon he came upon an oddly assorted trio lined up at the bar—Windy Tuttle, Pap Krause, and a stranger. Scenting valuable information, Barney stepped aside to watch their actions.

Windy and the stranger were plying

the old man with liquor which he appeared reluctant to accept. The harder the two persisted, the more stubborn he became. Tuttle lost patience finally, and began to curse and to shake the old fellow.

Indignant, Barney stepped forward to take the weakling's part. In a casual glance into the back-bar mirror Windy caught sight of Barney's frowning eyes. He paused, open-mouthed, clinging tipsily to the bar, a sodden grin creeping into his bony face. Then, with a lurch, he seized Krause by the arm and piloted him to the street, the stranger at his heels.

Barney's first impulse was to follow; on second thought he gave vent to a languid yawn and sidled down the bar to where the most voluble of three bartenders held forth.

"I didn't know old Pap Krause indulged in fermented joy," he remarked after ordering a fizz; "a mixed drink would give excuse for a casual question or two he reasoned.

"It's the second time he's kicked up our sawdust in years," vouchsafed the aproned one, deftly breaking an egg into the mixer.

"Humph! What does he do—buy a carload at a time, or is he something of a camel in his thirst requirements? How long since his other visit to this jag market?"

"He took on a few this morning; might have been yesterday, I ain't sure. Those two greasy coats fetched him in. I gotta hunch they're trying to skin the old guy out of something."

"What could that nutty old musher have that's worth skinning him out of?" queried Barney with assumed contempt.

"Dampfino! You can't always get their number. I've been hep to a lot of nuts you'd swear was batty, but all the time there's a pay streak in their noodle that's got the wise ginks peeled raw."

Barney did not put another question; instead he took off his hat to give the pencil a chance. Downing his drink in hasty gulps when the bartender drew back the seltzer siphon, he tossed the change on the bar and left. Out on the street, he lost no time in visiting the local marshal, to whom he put numerous questions relative to the habits and movements of old Krause.

He learned that the old fellow had tramped into town early the previous morning, decked out for one of his periodic trips. The old man encountered Windy and the stranger in front of Hogan's place. After a lengthy argument, Krause broke from them and tottered down the street, waving his arms and shouting incoherently.

From the marshal's office Barney went to Hogan's for a last look; then, calling for his pony, he headed for the mine. West of the mine, he guided the pony into a side trail and approached the Krause cabin.

Everything was dark and silent; nevertheless he dismounted and knocked, the door swinging open under his touch. Inside he noticed a warmth which came from neither the evening temperature nor the retained heat of the day.

By striking matches he located a lantern, which he lighted, and began to search the room. A crude bed filled with straw, but devoid of bedding, occupied one corner. Running his hand through the straw, he discovered what he least expected to find—a pair of high-topped lace boots!

His face was grave as he crossed the room to a cupboard. In passing the cookstove he noticed heat and found live coals beneath the ashes. At the cupboard he rummaged through a jumble of cooking utensils and canned goods; a mouse scurried out of a broken package of cereal and into some papers on an upper shelf. These he jerked down, uncovering a gray sombrero. A hissing exclamation escaped him when

he examined the hat; punched in the sweatband were the letters, B. C.!

Utterly discouraged, he turned to where a number of soiled garments hung from pegs beside the rear door. He looked them over and selected from among them a pair of moleskin trousers, also a brown flannel shirt, torn and bloodstained. In one of the pockets he found a crumpled envelope directed to Carson and bearing the company's return address, the same envelope he had delivered to Carson the eve of the robbery.

After a prolonged deliberation he gathered the incriminating garments together and carried them out to his pony. Returning, he examined the ground and paths around the cabin. In the rear all footprints were overrun by tracks of rodents; in front he could see where the last man before him had gone toward the creek, but his own approach had obliterated all chance of identifying them.

He cursed his thoughtlessness; then, fastening Carson's clothes to the saddle, he replaced the lantern where he had found it. With his foot in the stirrup, preparatory to mounting, he noticed the pony jerk up its head, ears pointed creekward. A twig snapped close at hand. He muzzled the pony with his hand, and listened to a rustling sound that drew near. A moment later a shadow glided past at some distance from him.

It was a human figure, yet it did not move like a man. A board creaked as the shadow stepped upon the cabin's excuse for a porch, then a light tapping on the door. After a second and louder series of taps the shadow pushed the door open, and a tremulous voice called: "Are you there, papa?"

A multitude of sensations swept over Barney; his expression of surprise was almost profane, nearly outspoken. Emily Carson down there at that hour—and calling for her father!

Barney's temptation was to rush into the cabin and confront her; he evaded the impulse by mounting and galloping full speed toward the mine.

Scanlon was dozing by cat naps when Barney entered the assay office. The foreman blinked owlishly at him, then at the clock, which indicated ten minutes of two.

"I'm sure thankful for your accommodation, Scanlon. I'll see you tomorrow. I need more advice. I'm all in now. Here's a couple of good smokes."

Barney held out two cigars, nervously expecting to be questioned, but whatever curiosity Scanlon felt was not manifest in his yawning, albeit grateful, "'Tis a prince ye be, lad!" as he passed out into the night.

## CHAPTER VI.

AN imperative rapping brought Barney to his feet in a single jump. He looked at his watch, to find that he had overslept a full half hour. The rapping increased, accompanied by a rattling of the doorknob. He made sure Carson's clothes were not in evidence, then admitted the caller.

Knucker confronted him, demanding the combination of the safe. More angered than amazed by the arrogant request, Barney refused.

"What!" rasped Knucker, lower jaw outthrust. "You'd better understand that from now on I'm boss around this mine by Middleman's orders."

"I don't care if you are hell's own ruler, you won't get any safe combination from me until I hear Middleman's voice myself!" retorted Barney.

Then he slammed the door and began to dress.

Knucker strode wrathfully from the office. Fifteen minutes later he was back, accompanied by Harper. By this time Barney was up and out.

"Morning, Donovan," greeted Har-

per. "I forgot to tell you yesterday—Middleman sent Knucker up to take Carson's place and gave him instructions to take full charge at once."

"I'm not stopping him, am I?" growled Barney, irritation getting the best of his temper.

Harper shrugged his shoulders non-committally.

"You refuse to obey my order," snarled Knucker.

"If it's the safe combination that's responsible for your sour ball, just believe I'm still refusing until Middleman gives his order direct to me."

Having delivered himself of this ultimatum, Barney went out on his way to breakfast.

Two sleep-stinted nights in succession, plus a seemingly endless chain of depressing discoveries; this overshadowed by Emily's irrefutable association with her father's hiding place, reduced Barney to mute glumness at the breakfast table.

His mumbled "Good morning" without the usual "Emmy," his evasive attitude throughout the meal, and his wordless departure left his hostess in another paroxysm of grief in which sore-felt neglect was not unmingled with vexation.

En route to the assay office, Barney caught an inspiration that sent him posthaste in search of Scanlon. He found the foreman on one of the lower levels.

"Say, Scanlon, you're pretty familiar with Buffalo Hogan's habits, aren't you?" he asked when the two were out of eye and earshot of the crews.

"Oi'm havin' a fair-sized knowledge av his tricks."

"I knew it. Now everybody knows he's a roughneck pug that no one in these parts has been able to lick, and he has a reputation for high speed on a gun draw; besides, as you say, he's got a thumb hold on the old-timers, but just the same, Scanlon, hasn't he got

a queer streak of some kind that's worth assaying?"

Scanlon's grizzled head wagged slowly from right to left in a wary survey of the adit.

"By golly, lad, pfwere did yez get the idee? They do say Buffalo's a crank on hoodoo numbers, an' he niver touches a carrd the day after he has a certain kind av a nightmare. Do yiz iver take a hand at his tables?"

"No, Scanlon, and, what's more, I don't intend to if I can avoid it. All I want——"

"Listen, lad; if yez are in no great hurry, Oi'll try for to find out if he's as bogified as he used to be; Oi can let yez know in the mornin'."

"Take your time," buoyantly; "helpful information is of more value than haste. I'll see you later."

Barney pivoted on his heel and headed for the shaft.

"Jist another bit av warnin', Barney," added Scanlon, taking the same direction. "Be a bit careful of how yez spake to the new boss; ye'd better humor him for a time, because—well, yez know pfwat was said about holdin' your fire till yez see the white av the eye."

Barney smiled his self-confidence and rang for the cage. Nevertheless, when he reached the surface and walked toward the assay office, he pondered long and soberly on the old foreman's words.

Before he reached the office he caught sight of Knucker ransacking the desk. Not caring to meet that domineering official just then, he turned down into the creek bottoms. In the vicinity of the Krause cabin he overheard Windy Tuttle's drawling voice; also the quavering treble of an older man pleading for mercy.

He quickened his pace in time to hear:

"Ding bust yore hide-bound car-case, yuh tuk it, yuh know yuh did! Now

tell me whar it's hid, or, by Jacky, I'll crack yore worm-eaten bean!"

"No, no, no!" moaningly. "Don't hurt poor old Pap. He never takes nothing; everybody feels sorry for poor old Pap—don't—oh—don——"

The senile pleading ended in a gurgle. Barney mounted the bank in one leap. Ten paces away Windy stood over the kneeling figure of old Krause, choking and shaking him unmercifully.

"Hey, you cur; none of that!"

The next instant Windy went sprawling, stumbling into the underbrush, flung there by a savage sweep of Barney's right arm.

Windy gaped up and over his shoulder in rum-dumb amazement; then went threshing from sight through the undergrowth.

Barney assisted Krause to his cabin. The enfeebled old man had been roughly handled, so much so that it was several minutes before he could give any rational explanation of what had taken place. But during the brief period of sanity that did ensue Barney was given a mental view of inner mysteries which sent him back to the assay office with knitted brows and clenched teeth.

At the hour Barney was conferring with Scanlon in the mine Emily received a visit. Just as she completed her morning's work a knock at the front door surprised her. Hope and fear assailed her heart simultaneously as she hastened to answer. To her dismay the caller was neither father nor lover.

"Ah, good morning, Miss Carson! I'm looking for a private place to board; I'm the new boss, you know. Knucker's my name," announced that individual with the dynamic gentleness one might detect in the bellow of a savage bull.

Emily had thrown the door wide open; a glimpse of her caller caused her to close it to a less inviting angle.



His announcement reduced the opening to a two-inch crack.

"We do not keep boarders," haughtily.

"Oh, I won't be much bother. You don't——"

The unappreciative surface of a tightly locked door flung Knucker's words back into his face. A caustic oath tainted the air as he turned to leave, and the vow he registered would have caused Emily more uneasiness had she heard it.

As a result of her flare at Barney, Emily had put in a miserable day and night. The news of Carson's untraceable disappearance, the mystifying bullion robbery, the stage holdup, and the murder of Bud Hardy had spread and grown like a pestilence. The settlement babblers gathered around her in croaking flocks, profuse with platitudes and prophecies, but barren of sympathy and comfort.

In addition to this, she was both provoked at herself for her unstrung resentment of Barney's well-meant proposal and half angry at him because of his apparent intention to ignore her for it.

Noon passed, yet he did not come for his dinner. By one o'clock she could stand the suspense no longer, and, swallowing her pique and pride, she hurried to the assay office.

Knucker was alone at Barney's desk when she arrived. His eyes glittered treacherously when he saw her coming.

"Is Bar—Mr. Donovan in?"

Without entering, she stammered her inquiry from the doorway.

"Not now, miss, but I'll sure be pleased to serve in his place. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, I must see him. When will he return?"

"I can't say; he's probably gone to the city."

Emily's face fell in spite of her bravery.

"Have you heard from your father yet?"

If vinegar possessed sweetness, Knucker's voice was saccharine.

"When Mr. Donovan returns please tell him Miss Carson would like to see him about a very important matter," requested Emily evasively as she turned to go.

"Just one moment, Miss Carson."

Knucker rose ponderously from the desk chair.

Emily paused; an uncontrollable shiver running over her.

"It's no use of my mincing words, miss; I know all about your father's trouble, and it happens I'm in the right position to help him out of his scrape. I've helped lots of people when they've been down and out. You see, I'm not such a bad fellow when you get to know my ways."

The words were not without effect, although she did not reply.

"I haven't been received into this camp very cheerfully," continued Knucker. Emily was tracing imaginary lines on the porch post, and there was a vulturous gleam in his eyes as he watched her. "But I ain't taking offense; my turn will come. They always shut the door in my face—at first. After that they come back and lick my hand; but that's what a fellow gets for not looking like a spoon-fed parlor entertainer. Now I'm going to show you how square I really am; I'm going to get your father clear of his jam before the week is out, and all I'm going to ask in return is that you treat me like a human being."

Half convinced that she jumped to a hasty conclusion in her previous judgment of Knucker, Emily felt a twinge of remorse. After all, Barney might be mistaken; it was not uncommon for lovers to be jealous of strangers.

She flashed him a warm smile over her shoulder.

"If you will do that great kindness

for my father, you may be sure that I shall make all amends I possibly can for shutting the door in your face," she declared gently. "And just as soon as papa returns you will be welcome to call on us at any time."

With her last words she stepped down and sped up the path toward the cabins. At the same moment, Barney, his face chalk white, jaw muscles ridged out like whipcords, came around the corner of the office and mounted the porch. Emily had not seen him, and he had arrived only in time to hear the last clause of her conversation.

Knucker stood just inside the doorway, his vicious eyes intent upon his departing visitor. Barney entered, glaring straight at the beastlike face. Neither man spoke. Knucker wheeled insolently and crossed to the desk, while, by strenuous effort, Barney curbed an inclination to leap upon the big man's shoulders.

Barney was nearer to actual murder than he had ever been. The very care he exercised in closing his bedroom door bespoke his deadly anger. As to Knucker's secret mind, a change of assayers would occur as soon as a new one could be engaged.

## CHAPTER VII.

BARNEY locked himself in and spent considerable time in brooding and reviling. He shook off the mood at length, and, arming himself with pad and pencil, tilted his chair against the wall, and was soon lost in the maze of his mystery of the problem.

Although Pap Krause had given him a momentary glance at a mystery within a mystery, such statements must, of necessity, be taken with salt, owing to the old man's unsoundness of mind.

Windy and the stranger were elements in the case both suspicious and erratic. Windy's deep interest in the old man, and the accusation which sug-

gested hidden wealth would bear further investigation.

The .41 gun taken from Windy gave him food for thought. It was identical with the one he had loaned Emily; in fact, both guns were a pair which he had brought to Molta himself, and the one discovered on Tuttle was, or should have been, in Barney's saddle holster the night before the bullion robbery.

Knucker was a factor of real menace, not only to the welfare of the mine, but to Barney's peace and happiness, and required close watching, if only for the latter reason.

Hogan was the Sphinx of them all. Any time Scanlon made a statement it could be counted upon as a fact. Barney was convinced that the notorious gambler's heart was a storehouse of keys that would unlock every solution. But to shatter that stronghold without destroying precious evidence—— The pencil disregarded the paper in preference for the amateur detective's hair.

The evening whistle found him still unable to locate a path that would lead him out of the labyrinth. It was long past supper time when he finally laid his problem aside and went to brave the late-again rebuke that would greet his entrance into the Carson kitchen.

In his present mood he would have gone on to the boarding house, but on passing the Carsons' cabin he saw Emily at the wood pile, filling her apron with wood. He hastened to relieve her of the task.

"Why, hello, stranger!" she greeted, mischievousness bubbling to the surface in spite of her grief.

"Good evening, Emmy," he answered, sober-faced. "You know that I'm not a stranger in thought," he added.

She started to reply, and checked her words by biting her lip; then stood gazing toward the corral, where her pinto was nibbling at the fence. She was between Barney and the last thin cres-

cent of the setting sun as it dropped behind a ragged sky line, and it was well for his self-control that his arms were filled with wood.

A tightness gripped his throat as he carried his load into the kitchen. Emily followed, but he deposited the wood in the box and started for another armful, hardly daring to look at her.

"I say, Mis-ter Don-o-van, have you forgotten how to talk?" she inquired mockingly.

He realized that he was thinking of nothing worthy to say. He was not angry, he was no longer a child; he was just human, and the grit in the oil of his hope was her invitation to Knucker.

He stole a sidelong glance over his shoulder. She stood at the table, her premonitory forefinger pressed against her teeth. The signal was unmistakable to him, and he paused on the threshold.

"I've got a lot to tell you as soon as I fill this wood box," he answered.

While they lingered over their supper he recounted many of his recent experiences, wisely omitting any mention of Carson or of his midnight visit to the Krause cabin.

After supper the conversation lagged, yet Barney was loath to leave. Emily got out her sewing, and as she worked she kept the conversation from dying out altogether by asking occasional questions. All subjects exhausted, Barney braced himself to speak of Knucker.

"I see you called on the new boss to-day."

"How did you know?" queried Emily absently, as she bit off a thread, her mind upon other matters.

A white-hot flash swept over Barney.

"I reached the assay office just as you left," he answered in a low, tense tone after a lengthy pause.

Emily dropped her sewing into her lap, her eyes focused upon a framed picture, her thoughts centered upon her father, whose face it outlined.

"What do you see about this Knucker——"

A timid knock upon the back door interrupted Barney's question. Emily whirled as if it had been a pistol shot; one hand flew to her bosom, the sewing slid, unhindered, to the floor. Barney glanced at her inquiringly, then stepped to the door himself. On the steps, in the patch of lamplight, stood old Pap Krause.

"Got to see Emily, quick!" panted the old man in a mysterious whisper.

"All right, Pap; come in and rest yourself," invited Barney.

The old man shook his head emphatically and handed out a slip of paper.

"No, no, no; Old Pap must hurry home," he whined, and slunk away in the thickening shadows.

Barney passed the note to Emily; then turned to reseal himself. A low, pained cry from her caused him to look around. With tears in her eyes she handed him the note.

EMILY: Will follow this note in half hour. Keep mum on my coming; I might be mobbed. I need clothes and money, have them ready. I won't stay long; not safe. Say nothing, but do not worry. DAD.

Emily plied him with innumerable and unanswerable questions, but with his own mind upset by the situation he remained silent. She replenished the fire to prepare something to eat, then stole into her father's bedroom from which she emerged with his business suit. Next she procured her purse from her own room.

Barney gulped as he watched her dump out a pitifully small amount of silver coin; his hand went plunging deep into his own pocket, with a result that several gold pieces, all he had with him, joined the heap of lesser coin. The tremulous, misty smile which he received repaid him with usury.

The wait seemed interminable. Emily became restless, pinning the curtains down as a double precaution. At

length the rear door opened stealthily, and in slipped an apparition in greasy overalls and jumper.

Emily flew to him with a pitying cry. Barney placed a chair and seized him by the hand. Carson sank into the seat heavily, sighing his exhaustion.

"Whatever has gone wrong, papa?" begged Emily, kissing his sunken cheeks and fingering a bloodstained bandage that encircled his head. "What has happened to you? How are you ever to clear yourself?"

"Don't pester me with questions now, Emily; I'm in no humor to answer them. Give me the clothes and the money; Buffalo Hogan and his rough-necks have started a double-cross game I'm going to finish to their sorrow. Middleman's sitting in, too, and, by the eternal, he's going to pay high on the show-down!" growled Carson bitterly.

"Oh, papa, for my sake—for your own sake—please, please don't get mixed up worse than you are now!" pleaded Emily, the tears beginning to flow.

"Don't worry; if they keep out of my road nobody will get hurt, except in the pocketbook. Where's my clothes?"

Emily brought out his business suit.

"Not them," irritably; "my working clothes. I've a lot of dirty work ahead before I'm through; they stole the clothes I had, but they'll all pay!"

Carson was cross. Barney saw it, and remained in the background, not daring to offer a suggestion.

Sobbing in a dry, hysterical way, Emily collected an outfit of old clothes. Carson rolled them into a bundle, picked up three gold pieces from the pile on the table, then rose to go.

"Don't let a soul know I've been home," he cautioned; "I'll be back——"

His words were cut short by a loud, insistent knock on the rear door. Emily gasped. Neither Carson nor Barney was armed, yet both made sugges-

tive gestures with their right hands. Carson stepped to an inner door and let himself into a small pantry, nodding to the others to admit the visitor as he did so.

Without thought of Carson's suit, draped over a chair, or of the money on the table, Barney opened the door. Hemmerson stood on the steps; behind him was Knucker.

"Howdy, Hemmerson," greeted Barney cheerfully, not deigning to notice Knucker.

"I hear Carson is back. Better tell him I'm here; it's important I see him at once," spoke Hemmerson in his crisp, official tone.

Barney glanced meaningly at Emily, but did not catch her eye; she was regarding Knucker with an imploring look. The sight whipped his rage into action; to control himself he faced the sheriff.

"Where are you referring to when you say Bart has returned?" parleyed Barney, his thoughts racing in search of a saving loophole.

"He was seen to enter this kitchen not fifteen minutes ago," replied Hemmerson, eying the suit of clothes and the coins on the table, also the note which lay beside the money.

Emily seemed frozen in the attitude she had taken when the sheriff entered the kitchen. In a vague way she was hoping that Knucker's presence meant that he was keeping his promise to help her father.

Barney stepped to the table, picked up Carson's note, and dropped it in the fire. The money he placed in Emily's purse; then he faced the sheriff.

"Hemmerson, I always figured you had good sense and eyesight until tonight. Here I've been all evening trying to cheer Emmy out of her troubles, and helping plan a scheme to make this lonesome bunch of money go a long ways; now you come butting in with more trouble. Haven't you any gen-

lemanly consideration for helpless women? If Bart's in this house, and you can find him, you sure can do more than I give you credit for doing."

Turning to Emily, he continued: "Now, Emmy, if you'll just give me a bit of paper, I'll wrap up my clothes and be going; they sure needed pressing bad."

Knucker leaned toward the sheriff and whispered something in his ear. The latter paid no attention. He was weighing Barney's words.

"You needn't imagine your fine talk went over my head, Donovan," he said, after a pause, "but this is a case where friendship loses out. As long as I'm sheriff of this county I'm going after Bud Hardy's murderer regardless of whom the blow falls on."

Emily's lips parted, though no words came. Unthinkingly she darted an apprehensive look at the pantry door. Hemmerson saw, and understood; his face looked grim as he crossed the kitchen and opened the pantry.

It was a tense moment for all, but as the door swung open each expectant watcher received fresh surprise; the pantry was devoid of human presence!

"Knucker, step out and see if my men outside have noticed anybody trying to leave!" rasped Hemmerson.

Knucker made haste to obey, while Hemmerson moved over to Emily's side.

"Miss Carson, if your father is in this house it will make the situation far easier if you tell him to come out and give himself up to me. If he doesn't, I shall search the place to-night."

"I haven't the least doubt about it; you officers have less sympathy than a savage dog. Search, if you are going to, and for all the good it will do!" flared Emily.

"You mean that your father is not in there?" demanded Hemmerson, pointing toward the front rooms.

"Exactly; he is not there."

Hemmerson bent one of his searching looks upon her. She met it unflinchingly, and he believed.

Knucker came in shaking his head. Hemmerson reopened the pantry and inspected its narrow window; a wire screen, attached from the outside, was intact. The neatly kept shelves afforded no hiding place; the floor was bare, except for a small square of oil-cloth upon which he stood to examine the window.

He stepped out and closed the door, leaning against it for a moment while he pulled thoughtfully at his ear lobe. Then he beckoned for Knucker to leave and started out.

"Donovan," Hemmerson's head reappeared through the half-closed rear door, "I know you're befriending these people, but take a piece of wise advice—don't try to interfere with my duties. That's not only legal warning, but a friendly tip. Good night!"

The door closed, leaving Barney and Emily staring at each other in a questioning manner. Emily collapsed into a chair, while Barney turned to the pantry, which he inspected with increasing wonderment.

"It sure beats me!" he breathed, stepping back into the kitchen.

Emily placed one hand over her lips as a sign for silence, at the same time beckoning him to her side.

"There's a cooler under the pantry floor," she whispered. "Papa made it a long time ago for the hot days. I get into it through a trapdoor; the oil-cloth is nailed to the trap to keep dust from falling through the cracks. Papa's hid himself in that; keep real still till they go away!"

Outside, Hemmerson and his deputies circled the cabin repeatedly, but their flash lamps failed to reveal any evidence that Carson had made his escape. Posting two guards for an all-night vigil, the sheriff went to the assay office to telephone.

Within the kitchen, Emily and Barney kept up a desultory conversation for almost an hour; then Emily tiptoed to the rear door and threw the bolt. Her next move was to see that the front door was also securely fastened. While she was doing this Barney covered the pantry window with a blanket.

Trembling with eagerness, Emily raised the trap; Barney, standing in the doorway, heard her gasp and moan.

"What's the matter?" he whispered.

She turned her face, pale and frightened, but did not speak; then she went limp. Barney bent forward to look, and gaped his own astonishment. Instead of any cooler box, he was peering into what seemed like a deep, yawning pit of blackness!

## CHAPTER VIII.

OH, Barney, this just makes me sick!  
Oh——"

Barney patted the sobbing girl's head tenderly and studied a moment.

"Emmy," he whispered when a feasible plan took shape in his mind, "you asked me to prove your father absolutely innocent; I'm going to do it—to-night! Tell me, where do you keep a lantern or a flash lamp?"

The words rallied her. A few minutes later Barney, armed with a flash lamp, lowered himself into the hole. The light revealed his head about ten feet below her.

"Close the trap, Emmy," he called, glancing up. "Looks like I'm in a drift. I'll soon find out. In the meantime get some sleep for yourself. If I discover anything serious I'll let you know as soon as I can. If you hear four taps on the floor, slowlike, you'll know it's me."

With a wave of his hand he passed from sight. Emily watched until the reflection of his light was no longer visible; then closed the trap. She did not go to bed, however, choosing to

sit in the darkened kitchen until she learned the best, or the worst.

Daylight came, but no Barney. The first tinge of dawn above the east ridges found him slipping noiselessly into the assay office. Hemmerson sat in the swivel chair, his feet on the desk, making up for his lost sleep.

Barney gained his room without waking the sheriff. As he closed the door he espied a telegram at his feet. The message was from Middleman, and informed him in a few terse words that he was to recognize Knucker's orders without question and that a new assayer would relieve him on the first.

He tossed his hat in a corner, extracted a pencil from his pocket, and reclined on the bed, but not to sleep. According to the telegram, to-morrow would be his last day with the Molta Mining Company, yet he was not conscious of regret; on the contrary, a subtle feeling of relief soothed him. Only his discoveries since leaving Emily served to depress him. He had not located Carson; nevertheless, what he did see completely squelched the remotest hope for Carson's innocence.

He had lacked courage to carry his knowledge back to Emily. Far better, he decided, to let her worry through the night in uncertain hope than to tell her the inexorable truth; yet he nursed a hope that something reassuring might turn up before morning.

Scanlon came in just before the whistle blew, but said nothing until Hemmerson woke up and hurried out.

"Have yez seen Bart, lad?" he asked in a loud whisper.

Barney answered with an almost imperceptible nod.

"Pfwere is he now?"

"I haven't the least idea, Scanlon."

"Well, lad, yez had best find him quick; the news be out that he's around the mine, an' ivery miner's son av them have sworn to lynch him!"

"Holy murder!" exclaimed Barney, leaping to his feet.

"'Tis murder, all right, but dommed unholy Oi'm thinkin'. But yez wanted to know about Hogan; he's that superstitious he goes to Frisco ivery onct in a while for to have a fortune teller give him a tip on his luck. Yez could—Oi'll have to be goin', lad; the boss is headed this way."

When Scanlon left, Barney's thought-inspiring pencil worked overtime. He heard Knucker enter and make an appointment for a long-distance talk with Middleman. Allowing a reasonable time to pass, he then picked up a hand mirror and went into the office, Knucker greeting him with a scowl intended to intimidate.

"I've telegraphic instructions to give you the safe combination; here it is."

Barney pulled down the desk top halfway, then held the mirror so that it reflected the inner surface of the top. In the mirror Knucker saw a strip of paper bearing the figures and formula of the combination.

"That's all. We'll see to it that the combination is changed on the first," sneered Knucker.

"No, it is not all; you will please open the safe, inventory its contents, and give me a signed receipt," demanded Barney.

"Humph! Just because you and the rest of your clique in this camp are thieves, you imagine I'm one, too, eh?" Knucker's tone would have enraged a Quaker.

"Am I addressing a gentleman or a common bully?" asked Barney, his temper well in hand, though the glitter of his eyes outstared the larger man.

Knucker grabbed the chair arms to rise, his mouth working over unuttered words. A footfall on the porch caused him to relax; he plucked at his unshaved chin as Hemmerson entered.

"You're the right man at the right time and place, sheriff," cried Barney.

"Please bear witness while I check the contents of the assay safe."

Thus circumvented in his aggressive spite, Knucker acknowledged the carefully checked inventory, signing a receipt with ill grace.

An idea came to Barney as he returned to his room. He opened the north window; then, donning his hat and coat, he went out through the office, locking his door as he left. Outside, he made sure that no one was watching his movements and crawled back into his room through the open north window.

Eavesdropping under other circumstances would have been repugnant to his sense of fairness; with a man's life at stake, however—a life upon which depended Emily's happiness—he felt justified in his action.

Hemmerson was at the telephone, conversing on official business. When he hung up he told Knucker that he would be gone for two or three hours, and if anything turned up to notify the deputies at Carson's cabin.

After Hemmerson's departure an interval of silence ensued. Then Barney heard Knucker's heavy tread move to the front door and close it; next he approached Barney's door and tried to open it; from there he went to the furnace room and laboratory.

Following these strange movements, the telephone bell jingled. Eyes sparkling, Barney held his breath for fear of missing the number Knucker called. There was a short pause; then Knucker's low, yet distinct, "Lo—that you, Buff? . . . Take a ride at one o'clock; I gotta see you. . . . You know—Jim. . . . Sure—same place. . . . G'-by."

Barney fairly hugged himself as Knucker hung up and tramped out of the office. When the big fellow was far enough away, Barney exited through the window and went after his pony. Ten minutes later he was galloping like mad toward Mola.

Emily could scarcely drag one foot after the other as she prepared breakfast for herself and Barney. Worried by the uncertainty occasioned by Barney's nonreturn, and exhausted by the night's experience, she was praying that some miracle would snatch away the gloom and return her father safe and sound.

The minutes lengthened into an hour, then two; yet Barney failed to come. A rap at the rear door sent her into fresh panic.

Knucker's coarse "Good morning" greeted her when she opened it; he stepped inside deliberately. She did not offer him a chair, but remained by the door, waiting for him to speak.

"Did your father show up yet?" he inquired, leering his conception of a smile.

Emily shook her head wanly.

"I guess you must know by this time that he will be lynched when he does show up," said Knucker with brutal plainness.

Emily's face blanched; she leaned against the door post to keep from falling.

"Why?" she gasped.

"Oh, the miners are all dead sore because he killed Bud Hardy."

Emily's indrawn breath hissed through her clenched teeth, her fingers intertwined in frantic agitation. For a moment her mind seemed blank.

"Now I happen to know where your father is hiding," volunteered Knucker patronizingly. "Fact is, I'm protecting him. I couldn't afford to tip my hand in front of the sheriff last night, but I had everything fixed beforehand; that's the reason he made such a slick get-away. If you want to see him, I'll take you out as soon as it's dark to-night; you see, he dassn't come in or show his face any more till this hulabaloo dies out."

Knucker had struck the winning note in his lure song, for Emily replied with-

out hesitation: "To be sure I will go; I simply must see him just as quick as I can. I'll be ready."

"All right. You've got two horses in your corral; you can loan me one. Then we can ride out of camp like we're taking an evening jaunt. Nobody will wise up to our real purpose at all."

And Knucker departed, highly pleased with himself over his arts of deception.

## CHAPTER IX.

BARNEY'S pony was a mass of blather when he reached Molta. He stabled it, arranged for a fresh horse, should he need one on short notice, then sauntered toward Hogan's saloon. He had covered the twenty miles between the mine and Molta with every ounce of speed his pony was capable of making, in order to have an eye on Buffalo Hogan and the one o'clock appointment, wherever it was to be kept.

As he strolled down Main Street, with its alternating stretches of cement and plank sidewalks, its odd blending of pioneer crudeness with modern architecture, squat frame buildings with dingy false fronts sandwiched between stately structures of brick and stone; as he passed door after door he could not help but notice the somber-faced men gathered here and there, in pairs, in small groups, in large crowds.

Some psychic influence was astir in those murmuring, frowning clusters of rough humanity. Far down the street, where Hogan's electric sign loomed high and large above its many competitors, Barney could see a crowd of unusual proportions.

Automobiles and saddled horses lined the curbs, with little space to spare. An eight-horse team, drawing an empty wagon and trailer, came up from the railroad yards and swung skillfully into a clear space ahead of Barney. Two men burst from a saloon entrance to greet the teamster. The single word,



"Carson," reached Barney's ears as he came abreast of the trio; then the bell horse shook itself, the violent jangle of bells and clattering harness drowning whatever else was said.

He passed beneath the stationary awning of the Molta Opera House, where large-lettered posters, still damp with fresh paste, adorned the billboards. Barney, his mind concentrated upon his errand, gazed at them without comprehension. Not until he was a block away did their significance penetrate his thoughts. He hurried back to read them carefully.

#### TO-NIGHT.

##### THE THREE MARVELS.

##### THE MARVELOUS MADAME DE LA SEER,

Mind Reader Extraordinary Foretells Futures  
Reveals Pasts.

##### THE MARVELOUS PROFESSOR SLEIGHT,

Peerless Prestidigitator. Mystifying Magician  
and Illusionist.

##### THE MARVELOUS AND ONLY DECEPTIN,

The Man With Eighty Faces. Greatest One  
of All Impersonators.

The Marvels themselves emerged from the theater and struggled through a circle of eager, clamoring urchins, while he was reading. He glanced at them appraisingly, then finished the press accounts of their remarkable entertaining abilities.

A daring scheme germinated in his mind; unpenciled, it grew into a well-defined plan. He wheeled so abruptly two girls behind him were almost swept from their feet. Shouting an apology over his shoulder, he started in pursuit of the show people, overtaking them at the door of their hotel. Breathlessly he requested a private interview.

"There's money in it for you, and a good man's life at stake!" he panted as they stared at him skeptically.

A sharp command in a foreign tongue by the woman won him consent from the men who escorted him into the hotel. When the four were seated behind locked doors, Barney broached his subject.

"Are you people willing to give a private séance after your regular show?" he asked. "Provided, of course, that my proposition and terms meet with your approval," he added, noting their dubious looks.

"We are open to any paying engagement that will not conflict with our bookings," replied the dapper little man who had been introduced as Professor Sleight.

"Well, gentlemen—and, pardon me, the lady—I desire to stage an entertainment for the especial benefit of this town's most prominent character, but, please understand, it's a strictly confidential affair; no advertising in advance. As to your pay——"

Barney paused to deliberate. His slender capital had been banked with an eye to the future; once spent on his present project, there were no chances of reclaiming it. On the other hand, he would be staking his all against an invincible crook; but what was mere gold as compared with the life of Emily's father? He rose above his hesitation.

"I'll guarantee you a hundred dollars apiece and foot all expenses myself," he continued. "And in case you have a bum night at the show house I'll try and do better by you. Shall I go on?"

"By all means," urged the woman, who did not wait for the others to answer.

The three hitched their chairs closer to Barney. In a few brief sentences he outlined his plan, and at the close of the conference they expressed themselves more than pleased to be of service.

Barney advanced money for special necessities, and left the arranging of a

private room in the hotel to their professional judgment. He bowed himself out, promising to return before show time with another interested party.

He next visited a friendly attorney, to whom he made known his scheme for breaking Buffalo Hogan's power and restoring peace at the mine. He left in high spirits.

The lateness of the hour surprised him. So intent had he been upon his new idea he had entirely forgotten the rendezvous he had set out to spy upon. Everything now depended upon speed; traveling by horse was out of the question, and he hurried to the nearest garage.

"Let her out to the limit!" he ordered of the chauffeur whom he hired.

And that individual obeyed to the extreme of recklessness. Without a single meet they careened up the cañon, whipping around curves, dashing through lanes of dense undergrowth, roaring up grades, streaking along narrow benches of roadway where the least skid would mean death at the bottom of the gorge.

Within a half mile of the mine, when they were taking a down grade, willow-screened curve almost on two wheels, the bent form of old Pap Krause stepped into their path not ten yards ahead.

The chauffeur operated horn and brake simultaneously, but with the downhill momentum and no chance to turn out he was helpless; the speed was not checked in time to save the fear-dazed old man.

Barney leaped from the car and knelt anxiously beside the senseless figure which the fender had tossed aside. He made a hurried examination. No bones seemed broken, no cuts were visible; nothing worse was apparent than a swelling lump on the weather-beaten forehead. He slipped one hand in next to the old man's heart; it was still beating.

"Help me place him in the car, driver; I don't believe we did worse than knock him unconscious."

As Barney spoke old Pap's eyelids quivered, then opened.

"Well, Pap, how do you feel?" asked Barney cheerfully.

Krause regarded the two with a mystified stare.

"You know me, don't you, Pap?" coaxed Barney, thinking the old man was suffering another demented spell.

Pap hitched himself into a sitting position and studied the faces of both men. He felt of his head and fingered the bruise.

"Pears like I know yuh, young feller," he said, squinting at Barney. "Who are yuh?"

It was Barney's turn to stare. In all his time at the mine he had never heard Krause speak in his present tone of voice.

"Oh, now I'm rememb'rin'; the stope caved. But whar's Bart an' Peters an' Canby an' the rest on 'em? Did they git cl'ar?"

Barney could have shouted for joy over Pap's words. It meant that after five years the old man's mind had come back; it meant another key to the long-hidden mystery—revelations that would add another blast beneath Hogan's pedestal of imperialism, and would perhaps bring Carson out of crime's shadow unscathed.

"We don't need to go farther driver," he announced. "Just run your car over to the cabin you see on the left; I want you to stay there with Pap until I come back. If anybody happens by while I'm gone use your wits. Don't let a soul question him; send them on their way in a hurry."

With Krause thus temporarily taken care of, Barney struck out for the assay office on foot. When he reached it he discovered the obese form of Isaiah Middleman waddling toward the mine in company with Knucker.

He glanced in at the office, where Harper and Simms were in close conversation.

"Anything new developed yet?" he asked.

Harper's reply was a laconic negative.

"The Old Man have anything to say?"

"Inquired after you is all. None of us knew where you were; he didn't seem to care much."

Barney hurried away to find Scanlon.

"An' pfwere have yez been, lad?" Scanlon asked anxiously when they met.

Barney told him as briefly as possible, adding:

"You must come with me as soon as you get off; I need your help. Come straight to old Pap's cabin."

"Oi'm with ye; but tell me, lad—have yez seen Bart since last night?"

"No; I've really been too busy. Why?"

"He were seen in the crick bottoms this mornin', an' the byes is huntin' him like hounds. If they find him first there's nothin' that'll save his neck!"

"I'll see Emmy; maybe she knows. Anyway, he'll not hang if I can get a running start. Don't forget, though; Pap's at six."

Barney started for the Carson cabin, realizing that in his excitement he had overlooked both breakfast and dinner. Emily's greeting was somewhat cool when he entered the kitchen. In answer to his first question she said that no word from her father had reached her since his strange departure. Inspired by his successes, Barney kept up a flow of cheerful conversation while she prepared his supper. She listened with little or no comment.

While he was eating she told him what Knucker had proposed to do for her. It had a sobering, silencing effect upon him. He toyed with his coffee

spoon for a long time, his eyes upon his plate.

"And you are actually going to your father with that man?"

His tone, rather than his words, aroused her stubbornness.

"I certainly am!" she retorted.

"Well, Emmy, I know it's useless to argue with you; but when it's all over I'm hoping you may feel just a wee bit mistaken. I vowed to clear your father; I'm going to do it. Yet you won't trust me. Now you're selling out to the worst enemy you've got; you're not only selling yourself, but your father's life and honor——"

"Not another word, Barney Donovan! If you are going to show your petty jealousy of a man who is honestly helping papa and me, I'll not listen to you. What are you doing to keep your word? You're never around when you are needed. With your own lips you tell me you've been hobnobbing with show people right when papa is wandering about with his head injured. Maybe he's sick and hungry. You know these dirty miners are just itching to hang him the minute he shows his head, and yet you go chasing off to Molta at the most critical time. If you haven't faith enough in me to trust me with Knucker you had better cut loose now; I can take care of myself!"

Emily was scathingly indignant, and it brought a noticeable droop to Barney's shoulders. He stood up, regarding her with a wordless, soul-hurt look.

"All right, Emmy, I'll not bother you any more; I'll do my share without interfering with your plans. I'll say good afternoon"—he hesitated slightly, then extended his hand—"and for fear it's good-by let's shake hands like good friends."

The tears were rising with overwhelming force. Barney passed out the door in a blind stupor, and when the door clicked shut Emily rushed to her bed to sob out her misery unchecked.

## CHAPTER X.

FORTUNATELY for Barney, his mind was not permitted to dwell upon his love troubles long. He noted that the sheriff's guard at the Carson cabin had been doubled; he wondered if the incriminating passage beneath the cabin had been discovered.

When he came in sight of the assay office, Middleman and Knucker were just entering. He swore roundly, for he was anxious to get to his room at once without being disturbed. He overcame the difficulty by means of the north window.

Once inside, he listened to make sure that his entrance had not been heard in the office. He heard Knucker leave, and then Middleman's choppy, choleric voice berating some one over the telephone.

Some newcomer trod heavily into the office as Middleman rang off, and Barney would have turned to accomplish his original purpose had not the voice of the watchman held him at the door.

"Howdy, Middleman! Kin I have a private word with yuh?" greeted Cyanide from the porch door.

Middleman, still panting from his wordy tirade at the phone, settled into the swivel chair and blinked at his caller.

"How do you do—er—what is your name?" he rumbled.

"Sutter's my name; Bill Sutter," answered Cyanide, advancing to the desk.

"Glad to see you, Sutter. You are welcome to a private interview if your business is important. You are the night watchman, are you not?"

"Yep, that's me."

"Very well, what is your trouble—if it is trouble?"

"Waal, I dropped in tuh-see yuh on this here robbery question," replied Sutter. "I've been doin' a little scoutin' on my own hook; I don't reckon

yuh'd grudge me a life-sized grubstake if I git that bullion back fur yuh?" Sutter leaned awkwardly over the desk as he finished speaking.

Middleman hitched his chair forward, rubbing his fat palms together beneath the desk top. The eavesdropper in the next room trembled with suppressed excitement.

"And you have found out where it is, who took it, and how it was taken?" inquired Middleman in a purring tone.

Sutter stared at the ceiling an instant, then fixed his disconcerting eyes full on the president's face.

"Yep!" he replied.

Again the swivel chair's pudgy occupant rubbed his hands; his face beamed.

"That's fine! And was it any one around the mine?"

Sutter wagged an affirmative, his eyes glittering in a way that gave Middleman an inexplicable chill.

"Ah—and it was——"

Middleman leaned well forward to better catch the reply to his unfinished question.

"What'll be comin' tuh me if I tell yuh?"

The president settled back heavily, frowning his annoyance at the unexpected reply.

"You will receive the reward which the company has offered and advertised—five thousand dollars."

"An' do I git all that money if I only tells whar them bars is hid?"

"If you know who took the gold, why are you asking such nonsensical questions?" snapped Middleman.

"Look-a-here, Middleman," flared Sutter in a metallic tone, "I ain't no hand fur gassin'; I've played cards straight from the deck fur more'n forty years." The president fidgeted, sketching aimless figures on the desk blotter. "Now I'll jest toss my hand on the table, an' yore welcome tuh play agin' it as hard as yuh please."

He paused, striving to catch the other man's eye.

"I kin tell yuh how the stuff wuz taken, an' who tuk it—but I won't," he continued, when Middleman failed to look up. "I kin show yuh the bullion, nary an ounce missin', an' inside o' twenty-four hours—but it'll jest cost yuh a twenty-per-cent rake-off!"

Middleman sat erect with a suddenness that threatened to capsize his chair.

"You! You!"

Apoplectic symptoms rendered further utterance impossible at the moment. Sutter waited, silent, unperturbed.

"So you're the scoundrel who did that telephoning!" shouted Middleman finally. "Why, I ought to call in the sheriff without another word!"

"All right; suit yoreself. But jest let me give yuh a little advice—if yuh're hankerin' right hard arter that bullion, don't be so all-fired anxious tuh bust them buttons off'n that calerco vest o' yourn."

Middleman fingered his collar and mopped his temper-heated face. He was not intimidated, but the blazing eyes of Cyanide were hard to meet.

"Just repeat your proposition," he requested in a calmer tone.

"Thar ain't much tuh repeat, mister; yuh give me twenty thousand dollars in cash an' a promise not tuh arrest me no time, an' I'll take yuh—straight tuh whar them in'ots is planted."

"Twenty—thousand—dollars!"

Middleman puffed, swelling like a pouter pigeon. The baggy pouches beneath his protruding eyeballs twitched spasmodically. His fat lips sagged apart; he even forgot to chew the unlit cigar which hung from them. His first attempts to speak produced animal-like snorts. Then:

"You—go—plumb—twenty thou— you infernal idiot, I'll have you arrested for extortion—blackmail—this very minute!"

Barney longed to snicker; he regretted his inability to watch the extraordinary proceedings in the office.

"Waal, Mister Middleman, yuh kin jest sit thar an' holler till yore guzzler's dry; I ain't got no more tuh say unless yore willin' tuh divvy the pot. I'll put yuh onter the stuff at my price, but I ain't tellin' nobody who did it—sabe!"

Middleman compressed his lips and drummed on the desk.

"Don't yuh figger on findin' it," continued Cyanide, "'cause it's planted so slick that hell'll melt it afore yuh folks gits a smell; even them that tuk it ain't knowin' whar it's gone tuh, but jest give me my price an' yuh kin have 'em all, pronto! If yuh don't conte acrost, I'll close my trap an' yuh'll be out the hull wad. What be yuh sayin', pardner?"

Sutter leaned over Middleman like a mountain lion tensing its muscles for a spring. The turkey red in the president's flabby cheeks faded to dingy gray, his features became a study in changing expressions. In the bedroom, Barney waited for the reply with bated breath.

"Get a chair and sit down, Sutter," spluttered Middleman, struggling to control his voice, "and let me explain some points you have apparently overlooked."

Sutter relaxed, but remained standing.

"Why not come clean with your information? Surely you don't consider five thousand dollars a despicable sum, do you?"

"I've talked more now than I'm used tuh sayin'!" snapped Sutter in a tone of finality and backing toward the door.

"Then I defy you; I'll order your arrest at once!" Middleman's voice again ran the ascending scale.

"Say, mister, if yuh knowed me better, yuh wouldn't waste no time tryin' to call my hand."

"I'll call your bluff, though; I'll make you talk!"

"Huh! The feller that kin make Cyanide Bill talk ain't been borned yet. If yuh ain't ready to agree in the mornin' I'll draw down my bet, an' yuh'll lose the hull outfit. So long!"

Middleman shouted "Hold on!" but Sutter was striding rapidly toward the mine.

Barney favored himself with a grin. His sympathies were with the watchman for the moment. He grabbed for the pencil of inspiration and began to mull over Sutter's statements relative to the hidden gold.

Intuitively he felt that the finale of climax was close at hand. He dared not trust altogether to old Pap's unstable mind; Windy and the stranger might or might not be the guilty ones, but time was too precious to waste in putting them to any third-degree tests. Carson was undoubtedly a victim gagged by threats. At any rate, he could not be located or depended upon before too late.

Under stress of impatience, Barney struck fist against palm. Everything hinged on Buffalo Hogan and the possibility of Madame De La Seer securing priceless information by means of her arts. If that failed—Barney pocketed his pencil so savagely that it went clear through the vest lining. Failure was not in his vocabulary, he assured himself.

Middleman was still in the assay office, and Barney, impatient to get into action, exited through the north window once more and started for Pap's cabin by the way of the arroyo.

Krause was asleep when he reached the cabin.

"He's been pacin' around fer a couple of hours, all the time talkin' about slides and fellers that's been dead fer five years," explained the chauffeur; "then he begun ter complain about his

head hurtin' him, so I fed him a little lickin' an' made him go ter bed."

"Fine work!" declared Barney, exuberantly cheerful. "Let him sleep. We'll have another passenger with us as soon as the whistle blows; then a nice job of making town at a gait that'll scorch all records."

Krause awoke before Scanlon appeared. The old man seemed none the worse for his accident, and, except for that hazy void of five years in his memory, he was as sane as ever.

Barney prepared him something to eat, after which he ventured a few cautious questions, without results. Krause remembered Barney's face, but could not recall events or associations later than five years previous, when the fatal slide had all but taken his life.

With Scanlon it was different. When the foreman arrived, Krause greeted him as a long-separated friend. Only Barney's urgent request for an immediate start checked the restored miner's volubility.

In town, Barney piloted Krause and Scanlon into the hotel through a side entrance just in time to meet the Marvels, who were departing for the theater. After the introductions Barney mentioned his uneasiness over the question of luring the wily gambler into the trap. The rapid-talking seeress begged to have the proposition left entirely in her hands, to which all acceded, although Barney retained a secret lack of confidence in her ultimate success. For this reason he excused himself and went out alone.

The street was thronged with an unusual crowd, attracted there by anticipations far more sinister than the show people's mysticism. Barney realized this before he had traversed two blocks. Trouble was in the atmosphere, lurking in the shadows, passing from muttering lips to eager, morbid ears.

King Lynch was abroad in ill-fitting disguise, and his worshipers were im-

bibing the liquid courage that primed them for the coming orgy.

Hogan's place was packed. Barney would not have lingered had he not seen jostling rows in front of the bar. He wormed his way forward until he stood against the glass and bottle-littered stretch of mahogany and almost opposite the famous proprietor.

Furtively Barney studied the man, in no way surprised that he should be known as "Buffalo." Standing six feet two, broad, massive shoulders, long, powerful arms and enormous hands, he was, to say the least, a formidable giant.

But his head was a study in itself. His hair, always close-cropped, grew well down over his high, straight forehead in a V-shaped point, giving him a low-browed appearance. The large, yellow-flecked eyes, washed-out blue in color, were set under bristled brows. When angered his eye pupils contracted to tiny, piercing dots, and the flecks glinted like sparks of electricity. An aggressive chin of abnormal length, also a large, flattened nose, were signposts of his combativeness. Even his ears were out of proportion to his bull-like head and neck, and his lips were perpetually compressed in the thin, straight line, scarcely moving when he spoke to any one.

For all his own well-conserved strength, Barney felt a mere pigmy in the presence of the gigantic saloon man.

At that moment two extra loud and bibulous patrons on Barney's right invited Buffalo to drink with them, and volunteered information that Carson was at last cornered in the mine.

Buffalo accepted the invitation with tolerant nonchalance, breathing an oily expression of sympathy for the hunted man's lot.

From the one-sided conversation which followed, Barney gleaned knowledge that set his blood afire with in-

dignation; Carson was to be hanged at daylight, even at the cost of a pitched battle with Hemmerson's posse!

Some one shouted, "All aboard for the big show!" and with a ribald uproar two-thirds of the crowd surged streetward, bound for the opera house.

Barney, his eyes registering righteous wrath over the mob's intentions, was unconsciously staring at Hogan, yet his thoughts were swiftly groping for some means of forestalling the coming tragedy. Buffalo caught Barney's stare. Quick to sense an antagonist, he stepped forward and leaned over the assayer.

"What seems to be your difficulty, young fellow?" he growled through set lips, his great eyes fixed with their most intimidating glare.

Barney's muscles grew rigid, his thoughts concentrated upon the speaker, but he offered no reply.

The battle of eyes continued until it attracted the attention of all within the saloon. Instantly there came a dead, ominous hush.

But for once Buffalo had encountered eyes that would not down before his own. His great chest swelled with indrawn breath, his knuckles showed white as his hands gripped the edge of the bar.

"Oh, I getcha!" he sneered through his nose. "You're that milk-fed assayer of Carson's!"

A dangerous smile flickered an instant at Barney's lips and in his eyes. Beyond that he made no sign.

Buffalo's gaze dropped to Barney's left arm; the latter's right hand rested on the bar, the left was below Buffalo's line of sight. At that unmistakable hint Barney exposed his left hand without once shifting his eyes.

The situation was proving irksome to Hogan. To cover his embarrassment he glanced impressively at his silent, awe-inspired watchers, then back at Barney.

"Say, kid, get next to yourself; beat it before somebody spansks you!"

Barney's ears turned bright red, his lips dead white. He craned forward until his face was close to that of the saloon man.

"You seem to be something of a king-pin around this town, Buffalo Hogan. Let's see now just how far your authority goes. I demand you to call off this hanging social of yours!"

Hogan snorted derisively; an on-looker snickered.

"There's the door, kid, and you're all together!" bellowed Hogan.

"Very well, Buffalo; if Bart Carson hangs I'll kill you in a man-to-man fight—guns, knives, or fists!"

Barney paused to note the effect of his warning; then strode from the saloon, his own heels making the only sound that was heard.

## CHAPTER XI.

**A** TUMULT of emotions surged in Barney's breast as he walked from Hogan's to the hotel. Sober second thought on his impulsive threat to kill Buffalo did not give him much comfort, and he was anxious to confide in the cooler-headed Scanlon.

At the hotel, he was disappointed; both Scanlon and Krause had concluded to take in the show. He tried to wait until their return, and succeeded—for ten minutes. Then his unrest drove him to the theater.

There he found that not even standing room was available, let alone locating his friends in the audience. As he started back along the semideserted street, his thoughts reverted to Emily and the evil-eyed man in whom she had pinned her trust; in concentrating his energies upon the problem of entrapping Hogan he had almost forgotten the equally dangerous Knucker.

"This is no place for me," he muttered. "Scanlon and the lawyer can

watch this end of the game; I belong at the mine."

With one of his abrupt turns he hurried to the hotel, scribbled a note for Scanlon, then secured his pony and galloped rapidly out of town, en route for the mine.

Emily found it impossible to define her sensations as evening drew near. Throughout the afternoon misgivings as to the wisdom of her faith in Knucker lessened the comfort of her anticipation. She prepared supper for Barney at the usual time, confident that his good nature would bring him in spite of their noontime quarrel.

When darkness fell without his appearance, she became first alarmed, then angry. Leaving a spiteful note where he might see it should he come in after her departure, she seated herself in the darkened kitchen to await Knucker's coming.

It was a long wait. She had all but given him up when finally he knocked at the door. She pointed out her father's saddle to him, and while she saddled Goo-goo herself she realized that she was equally as restive as the pinto. When she started to mount, Knucker stepped forward to assist her. He was unnecessarily familiar, yet she attributed it to his clumsiness and said nothing, perturbed nevertheless by the odor of alcohol on his breath.

One of Hemmerson's deputies approached inquiringly; Knucker said something to him in a low tone, and the man returned to his post.

Knucker led the way down the Motta Road until they passed the Krause cabin. At this point he turned to his left and followed a trail leading south. Emily was puzzled by the turn when she recalled the report that her father had been seen in the mine only a few hours previous.

From time to time Knucker endeavored to start conversation, but with-



out success; Emily enjoyed her own thoughts better. The ride lasted for miles without interruption. The moon had not yet risen; still she was able to note that they were going higher and deeper into the hills.

Finally Knucker swung out from the tangle of copper-blighted bull pine and scrub oak and into a heavily timbered cañon. Thirty minutes later he drew up before a cabin barely visible amid the undergrowth.

"Well, here we are," he announced in a hoarse whisper as he dismounted.

Emily dropped hastily from her saddle for fear he would attempt to help her down.

"Go inside and wait," he commanded, "but don't strike a light until I come in; I'll bring your dad after I put these nags where they won't be seen."

Although Emily obeyed him, the first suspicion of treachery she had yet experienced crept upon her. The interior of the cabin gave out a dank odor of wildness and unoccupancy. Rodents scurried about unseen.

Knucker came in alone and struck a match. In the flare of its blaze she saw an evil, triumphant smile on his face as he lighted a lantern, which he placed upon a patched, filth-covered table.

"Is papa coming?" she asked, quelling the tremor that tried to dominate her voice.

"I called him; he'll be right along. You see, he's careful about showing himself in a hurry; wants to make sure he ain't being tricked again."

Emily buried her hands in the pockets of her sweater and surveyed the room. A dilapidated soap box and a short log, up-ended, were the only available seats, and with the table constituted all the furniture. A crude mud-and-stone fireplace, crumbling with age, was built into the end wall, the three small windows were tightly boarded, leaving the stout plank door, through which they

had entered, as the only means of exit. Dirt, twigs, and leaves filled the corners and littered the rough board floor. An uncontrollable shiver shook Emily as her eyes came back to Knucker.

"Sit down, miss, and rest while we're waiting. There's a few things I'll put you wise to about your dad and this trip of ours."

Again Emily shivered, though less violently. She needed no further assurance than his words and manner to convince her she had entered a trap of some sort. Nevertheless she felt an exceptional presence of mind and seated herself without exhibiting her true feelings.

Under pretense of adjusting his belt, Knucker shifted a gun and holster into plain sight and easy reach; then began to talk.

"Now, Miss Carson, it is not my intention to go back on my word about helping your father, but there's one thing you've got to promise me before I do my part. Oh, don't get uneasy!" he interposed as Emily darted a frightened look at the door. "Your dad won't be along for a couple of minutes yet, and I want you to get a complete idea of my plan before he shows up."

She looked at him searchingly.

"To start with, I'll tell you that Carson didn't kill Bud Hardy. Tickles you, does it? Well, just you remember this; there's only one man to go to the front and say so—that's me. Oh, don't get excited. I ain't going to open my face until you say just what I want you to. Is that plain?"

During his talk Emily fell to watching two insects that fluttered around the lantern globe. When he paused she flashed him an indignant look, then resumed her study of the insects.

"I can tell you that right now your dad is bottled up in the mine by the sheriff's posse. But as soon as it's daylight the miners are going to give the posse the run and take care of your

dad themselves, and, you know, those miners have their own style of handling such cases——"

Thinking swiftly, seriously, Emily now broke in with: "I don't mind telling you to your face that you are lying! It has been proved beyond all doubt that papa took the bullion out of revenge and then shot Bud Hardy to keep him from telling what he knew."

"Do you really think so?" leered Knucker.

"I'm so positive you cannot convince me otherwise," declared Emily with a contemptuous shrug.

"Then you don't happen to know that Bud Hardy knocked your dad on the head, swiped his clothes, and chucked him onto a freight train the night he intended to go to Frisco? You don't happen to know that Hardy gave Tuttle your dad's clothes and peddled the gun and watch at Hogan's bar? There's a lot more to the story, but how does that much of it sound to you?"

Emily shook her head in a listless manner.

"That may be your story, but it doesn't prove that papa did not take the bullion from the safe himself," she replied.

"Well, if they put the noose over another fellow's neck instead of your dad's in the morning, it'll be very apt to loosen that same fellow's tongue; but, here, I ain't got time to waste on any gab fest. If you intend to save your dad, speak quick—give me a promise."

"I'll answer you when you tell me what to promise. First you tell me papa is here; then that he's in the mine. Which am I to believe? Don't sit there grinning like a baboon; speak out and let us be getting back before it is too late!"

Knucker chuckled inanely.

"All in good time, chicken," he answered. "We'll go when you promise to marry me, and after we've ridden into Molta to-night. After the marry-

ing squire says two equals one, if you act nice and ladylike, we'll be back at the mine in time to give the big scare a grand-stand finish——"

"And if I refuse?" Emily's tone was icy.

"Why, if you're foolish enough to refuse, right here we stay until your dad's heels no longer touch the ground. Then we'll go back, but you'll be a mighty sorry girl. Lots of people at the camp saw you ride out with me; they think you're ducking before the trouble starts, and when you do get back I don't think you'll feel much like telling them—the—truth!"

"And in the meantime, what shall I do with this?"

Knucker grunted in genuine surprise. All through the interview Emily had sat with her hands folded in her lap, but as she coolly put her last question he saw himself covered with a businesslike revolver.

He breathed heavily and licked his thick lips.

"Looks like you'd use it fast enough. What's my move to be?" he asked in husky fear.

"Toss your gun on the floor behind me."

He moved as if to obey, but with a lurch, amazingly swift for one of his bulk, he sent lantern and table crashing to the floor, at the same time throwing himself sidewise toward the wall.

The room went into instant darkness. Then followed a wearisome, soul-trying siege. Emily suppressed her breathing with difficulty, straining her ears to catch some sound of her enemy, not knowing that his actions were identical with her own. Neither dared to move for fear of attracting gunfire from the other.

The suspense soon became agony; she had leaped to her feet when Knucker smashed the lantern, but had not moved since. The slightest relaxation of mus-

cles would have afforded her relief, yet she feared the risk. As the moments of silence dragged by she felt that she must either scream or collapse.

How long the strain lasted she could not tell. Once, hearing a horse sneeze, her hopes rose, only to die when no cheering hoofbeats followed. The atmosphere became stifling; she wondered if this would overcome her in spite of her vigilance.

A faint creak, then a scraping sound, roused her. Rigid, watchful, she held her weapon ready for attack. Suddenly the door opened, closing instantaneously. Dawn was just breaking, and for that fleeting instant a body was outlined against the lesser darkness beyond the door. Almost without thought she fired. A loud oath was drowned by the slam of the closing door; iron rasped against iron.

Knucker had made his exit quickly, fastening the door outside. Emily leaped forward, vainly seeking a latch; a volley of blasphemous abuses came to her ears through the thick panels.

"Just for that you'll stay there till you rot; I'll plug you the minute you show your head!" he cursed.

In the silence that followed, Emily sank to her knees with a choking sob. Instead of helping matters, her impulsive shot had made the situation even worse. Now her father would be killed long before she could reach him with news of his innocence.

Barney turned his pony loose in its corral below the assay office, then went direct to the Carson cabin. Two deputies, who were still on duty, flashed their lights over him as he approached, but with a cool nod he passed and entered the kitchen.

He rapped on the inner door, calling Emily's name. When a second rap brought no answer he lit the kitchen lamp to discover her note.

For a long time after he read it he

stood with one leg flung over the corner of the table, mechanically tearing the note into tiny bits and allowing them to sift through his fingers. His face appeared haggard, his eyes strained, a look accentuated by fatigue and loss of sleep. If he had only had the least inkling of her whereabouts he would have gone in pursuit, he would have brought her back even if he had to kill Knucker to accomplish the rescue.

At length he sighed, and, after extinguishing the lamp, stumbled wearily out the door. He had not realized how tired he was until he read that discouraging note.

Out in the cool night air, under a deputy's curious eyes, memory of other work to be done within a diminishing period of time swept all heartaches aside; once again his unconquerable spirit blazed into action and sent him swiftly toward the assay office.

The building was deserted when he entered, but instead of going to his bedroom he entered the furnace room and fumbled about in the dark. Later, armed with a pick and shovel, he passed out through the office and was soon lost to view in the creek bottoms.

## CHAPTER XII.

AS the stars dulled before the advance of dawn an unusual influx of mounted men was noticeable above and below the mine property. An occasional auto also drew up within pistol shot of the mine settlement; its grim-faced passengers, close-tongued, heavily armed, slid from their seats and disappeared, ghostlike, into the gray gloom of the undergrowth.

Even at the mine an undercurrent of disquiet was manifest. Night crews neglected their work to gather in whispering groups and to cast malevolent glances at any deputy who attempted to draw near. Hemmerson's men were

outnumbered ten to one, seeming like stray watchdogs amid droves of wolves.

Middleman, unsuspecting of the coming clash, intent only upon the lost bullion, rose with the first streak of daylight and made a round of the surface workings, reaching the assay office in an irritable frame of mind.

He telephoned to the boarding house for Knucker, nearly exploding when told that the superintendent was not in his room, nor had occupied his bed that night.

His next call for Harper brought both detectives to him in a hurry. The three were soon involved in a wordy interview that assumed the character of a quarrel; it closed abruptly when Middleman happened to glance out the west window and espy Cyanide Bill's familiar figure on the arroyo bank.

Memory of the watchman's daring proposition swerved Middleman's thoughts into another channel. Calling Harper, he hurried, with fat-hampered speed, toward the arroyo. Sutter, hearing him approach, gaped over his shoulder in a vicious stare.

"Looks like yuh win," he muttered thickly.

"Win what?" barked Middleman.

"Why, them in'ots, o' course. Yuh found 'em; they're gone," snarled Cyanide.

"What—what do you mean!" yelled the president.

By this time the latter, with the detectives at his heels, was near enough to observe the bottom of the arroyo. Instead of the usual scum-covered pool there was now an expanse of slimy green mud with only a suspicion of water in its center.

Middleman gazed from the empty pool to Sutter's puzzled face; then turned to Harper.

"Place this man under arrest!" he shouted. "I'm overfed on trickery; I've—take him away!"

A scornful, thin-lipped smile twisted Cyanide's face.

"Jest yuh change them orders, Mister Middleman, an' git these tenderfeet outter my way. I ain't filched none o' yore gold, an' I ain't intendin' tuh less'n yuh give me a cl'ar title tuh it. Fur a long spell back I've knowed yore in'ots would show up missin' some day, an' I wuz aimin' tuh sit in on the game fur a grubstake. I knowed all the time them in'ots wuz cached in that thar skeeter nest. Now some measly cuss has swiped in'ots, pond, an' all! Maybe yuh did, an' it's sure topped my hand to——"

Neither Harper nor Simms made a move as they listened to Sutter's declaration.

"Are you all dead?" yelled Middleman. "Isn't some one going to obey my order?"

Both detectives stepped forward, but hesitated when Sutter flashed an ugly-looking six-shooter into view.

"Jest one more step an' I'll make buzzard grub o' the hull crowd! Thar ain't goin' tuh be no arrestin' take place here; the man that follers me better fetch his own hearse!"

Middleman was mad, recklessly so. His detectives halted in discreet silence, but the president kept on.

"Stand back, Middleman!"

Cyanide's drawl would have sent old-timers scurrying for bullet-proof cover.

"I ain't used tuh givin' no second warnin'; this here gun'll speak next!"

But the obese president, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, except the wings of his vanishing gold, kept on. Sutter's gun roared, its shot scorching Middleman's right ear. He stumbled, taking one more step to regain balance. Came another vicious report and a small furrow opened between his feet. Dirt and grit showered over him. He threw up his hands convulsively; then, reeling, toppled over the bank and rolled down the slope to the pool.

Breakfast time came at the mine boarding house, but no breakfast. Yielding to the lure of excitement, the cook and his helper had lingered too long at Molta's joy fountains after the show, and were still lingering, becalmed, befuddled. Noisy, restless miners swarmed at the closed dining-room door, some genuinely tired from all-night labor, others excited, the majority more or less drunk, and all hungry.

The boarding boss fumed around the kitchen in an effort to pacify the clamoring horde. Cyanide Bill's two shots came to the distressed man's relief.

The quivering needle of attention swung instantly arroyoward as those two whiplike reports cut the air. Everybody started for the assay office on the run. Opposite Carson's cabin, their attention was again diverted.

Carson's pony came trotting up the trail. Knucker was in the saddle, reeling in wide circles like a man drunk. When crowd and pony met, the rider toppled and slid limply from the saddle—dead!

In the same breath a man came running from the shaft house at top speed. "Carson's out; he's escaped!" yelled the runner.

Those who had stooped to examine the shattered, blood-drenched right leg of the dead man shouted:

"It's Carson's work, the murdering cur! Hunt him down, every man of you!"

A familiar sombrero was exposed an instant at the rear of Carson's cabin. In a twinkling the mob cry rose from many lungs, spreading like a breeze-fanned grass fire.

"He's in his cabin—bring him out—tear it down—burn it—hang him up!" were the yells that swelled in volume.

The two deputies took a defiant stand on the cabin porch, but with derisive yells the mob spread into a skirmish line, its flanks sweeping around the cabin like a monster claw.

The foremost runners dashed for the rear door, only to come to a startling halt. Barney, arrayed in Carson's clothes and armed with two automatics, suddenly appeared on the steps from within.

But the pause was only transitory. As soon as they realized that Barney was all they had to contend with they prepared to rush him en masse. He tried to speak, and was instantly hooted into silence. He raised the automatics and trained them on the leaders.

Angry growls greeted his act. Far from being cowed, they were doubly enraged because of his interference with their revenge. A rock whistled past his head, splintering the door panel behind him. Another struck him a numbing blow on his left shoulder. His face blanched from pain, yet he smiled—a smile of stubborn defiance. His grip slowly tightened on the gun butts.

A dozen hands appeared above the heads of the mob, each containing rocks or bricks. Barney fired one high shot as a warning. The hands dropped; but here and there men began to draw guns. These were immediately whisked from view by cooler heads who had no wish for Barney's life.

The rock throwers let loose their volley, hitting Barney twice. He let two shots kick up the ground at their feet; then elevated the muzzles, resolved to make the rest of his shots collect their toll.

Unseen by him, a lariat whirled through the air from one side, dropping neatly over his head, clamping his arms to his sides. The coup was greeted with yells of profane glee, willing hands seized the lariat, and helpless Barney was jerked from his feet to be dragged ruthlessly from the steps and over the rocky ground.

Then the majority of the blood-lusting mob surged toward the kitchen door.

## CHAPTER XIII.

EMILY'S despair was fleeting; reason brought her to her feet with redoubled determination. Daylight had grown, and enough light now streamed through cracks to enable her to move about freely.

As a chance of escape the door was hopeless, the windows equally so without bar or sledge to remove the firmly spiked boards, and nothing appeared available. She turned to the fireplace, intending to dig loose one of its bowlders. A faint streak of light seeping through its back wall gave her a better idea.

She sped to the log. Tipping it, she rolled it across the hearth. By rocking it back and forth, she had an effective battering-ram.

Long minutes of hard, exhausting work, during which time she was nearly choked by dust, bruised and cut by falling stones and chunks of dry mud, tested to the limit of her strength, she emerged into the open air.

She staggered twice around the cabin, but Knucker was nowhere to be seen. Wholly unnerved by fear that he had gone, taking her pinto with him, she sank, sobbing, to the doorstep.

"Oh, daddy, daddy, how can I——"

A shrill neigh interrupted her wailing cry. With a glad "hello," she sped in the direction from whence it came. A hundred yards down the trail she found Goo-goo nickering his joy. Knucker had evidently turned him loose, but the bridle rein having caught on a broken limb, the pinto had made no attempt to break away.

No spurs were needed on the homeward trip. Ears flattened, nostrils spread, eyes flashing, the pinto heeded neither rocks nor ruts. Two miles were covered before Emily was able to locate herself. Then, with sinking dread, she realized the miles of tortuous trail which lay between her and the mine.

Knucker's gloating prophecy rang in her ears, tore at her heartstrings. Unable to banish the fear that a life depended entirely upon her, she gave Goo-goo full rein.

Mile after mile slipped beneath the animal's flying hoofs. A gentle breeze blew in her face; on it the echo of Sutter's shots drifted far. She thought her heart stopped beating when those portentous sounds broke the morning stillness.

By trail a mile remained to go. Cross-country a fraction of time and distance might be saved. Reining the pinto sharply to her left, she urged him to greater speed.

His blood afire with the lure of the chase, Goo-goo went crashing over a brush-littered knoll, leaped a dry wash that would have checked a veteran, and dislodged a miniature avalanche of small pebbles as he charged up the last ridge.

A third shot barked as he reached the top. One glance at the mob around her cabin revealed the stride of tragedy below. Emily screamed; no one heard, except the pinto, who dashed down to the creek with redoubled speed.

In great, muscular leaps the animal lunged up out of the creek as if spurred by the two last shots. He needed no guiding; before the brutal rope wielders were aware of his coming, the pinto was on them. His teeth caught the foremost man a vicious nip in the shoulder, the second ruffian went down beneath the racing hoofs; the rest broke and ran in cowardly fear.

Emily, her tam gone, her hair streaming, slid from the charging pinto and sped to the now unconscious victim, who lay face downward in the dirt, lacerated, bleeding, motionless. She turned him gently; then screamed.

Middleman's ludicrous descent ended far out in the arroyo bed. As he rolled into that basin of ooze five heads ap-

peared above a clump of bushes half-way down the bank. The detectives and Cyanide stared at them in surprise, only to revert back to Middleman when the latter uttered a spluttering shout.

Standing knee-deep in the mass of slimy silt, his expansive body streaked and plastered with green scum, both pudgy hands holding aloft an oblong, mud-covered, yellow object, he presented a picture that baffled human description.

As the bedaubed president lumbered up the slope he encountered Windy Tuttle and the stranger coming from the clump of bushes. Both men were holding their hands in position to suit the attitude of Hemmerson, Scanlon, and Krause, who followed with drawn guns.

The stranger slouched along sullenly. Windy moved with a swagger; when he recognized Middleman he guffawed.

"Mornin', Middleman," he drawled.

The president stared hard at the quintette.

"What seems to be your trouble, Middleman?" grinned Hemmerson.

"My trouble? Oh, hello, sheriff!" responded the president after another searching look at the five. "Why—ahem—no trouble at all! Come to think it over, I wouldn't have missed that shooting entertainment for the world; I happened to land where the stolen ingots are cached."

The stranger glared malevolently at Windy, who chuckled in an idiotic manner.

"What is the meaning of all this wild West parade?" demanded Middleman.

Before an answer could be given Barney's first shot rang out. The detective started up the bank to investigate. Hemmerson turned his prisoners over to Scanlon and the president, and started to follow. Echoes of two more shots galvanized him into a run, which increased when Emily screamed.

She had not screamed because of personal danger; the cry was involuntary when she recognized Barney. Hemmerson, outdistancing the detectives, was treated to an unusual sight.

Emily, knowing that Barney's condition was critical, glanced around for some one to help her. One glimpse of the retreating mob brought her to her feet in a fury.

"You! You! You devil-fostered cowards!" she hurled at them, lacking epithets more fitting to their kind.

"You, Spud Foley—come here—this instant!" she demanded of the nearest man.

Out came her revolver when he hesitated.

"Come! Now, cut away this rope quick!"

And the hulking miner obeyed as a whipped dog might grovel at her feet.

His companions had paused to watch, but when the revolver flashed in her hand and Hemmerson came running many began to slink away.

"Don't a man of you dare leave!" shrilled Emily, noting the movement.

"Come here, Donkey Jack; you, too, Dead Rock, and Blackie—help Foley carry this poor boy to the house. Be careful! Lift him easy; if one of you cowardly brutes hurt him one bit more I'll shoot, and shoot to kill!"

Though humbled, as ruffians oftentimes are, by the mere presence of a woman, Emily's well-known skill with rifle and revolver had much to do with their obedience. Far different was that motley procession of crestfallen, sobering miners from the cursing, liquor-crazed bullies who, less than twenty minutes previous, were defying law and justice to promote their fancied vengeance.

Emily kept close to Barney's side. At the cabin door, she ran ahead to prepare her father's room, but stopped short in the doorway of his bedroom; her father lay in his own bed!

With quick presence of mind she

jerked the door to and led the way to her own room. When Barney, still unconscious, was laid in her own dainty bed, she wheeled to those who were crowding the kitchen.

"Let me see how fast you would-be assassins can bring a doctor here!" she cried.

The room cleared in a twinkling as the less morbid ones vied with each other in an effort to be first to obey. The last man shut out, she hastened to build a fire. A call of "Oh, Emmy!" took her from this task to find Barney sitting up in bed, poking one finger through his blood-caked hair in lieu of the customary pencil.

"Oh, Barney, dear, you must not do——"

"Is your—is *he* safe?" interposed Barney, anxiety plain in his eyes.

She nodded and gestured for silence.

"You must lie still, dear; I'll have warm water soon to bathe your poor head——"

"Never mind me," he protested, thrilled, nevertheless, by her term of endearment. "He needs a doctor and you at once. He's in a mighty bad fix—hurt, I mean."

Emily uttered a pitying cry and darted for her father's room, only to be interrupted by Hemmerson, who had entered the kitchen unnoticed.

"Miss Carson, I don't aim to bother you, but please tell me if you know where your father is hiding," he asked.

She wheeled, her back to the closed door. All color fled from her face as she studied the sheriff searchingly, distrustful.

"I have nothing to tell you," she replied, curbing a temptation to drive him out at the point of her revolver.

"I'm sorry then, if that's the case; my men could get him back to you much quicker if we knew where to look. There's no trace of him anywhere. However, it may comfort you to know that he's cleared from all

charges; the guilty men have been caught——"

The sheriff's explanation trailed to silence; his audience had vanished within Carson's bedroom. Following, he found Emily kneeling by her father's side uttering throaty cries of pity and affection which the semidelirious man did not heed.

Carson, two ribs fractured and highly inflamed from lack of attention, was in a critical condition. In one swift glance Hemmerson read symptoms of hunger and exposure. He did not stop to question, but dashed out to fetch medical aid without delay.

## CHAPTER XIV.

SIX people gathered within the Carson kitchen that evening—Hemmerson, Middleman, Scanlon, Barney, Emily, and Krause. Carson was asleep; his injuries dressed, his hunger appeased, he rested easily. Buoyed up by an eagerness to hear full details concerning Buffalo Hogan's dethronement, Barney and Emily appeared far from exhausted.

"Well, Scanlon, you seem to be chief unraveler of these mine troubles, suppose you start the story going," suggested Hemmerson as eager as the others to know more.

"Oi don't mind tellin' pfwat Oi be knowin', but yez must give young Barney credit for pickin' the right strings for me to pull. 'Tis him that got the idea; Oi only did as he told me," answered the foreman simply.

Surprised eyes turned to Barney, whose bandaged, court-plastered face was scarcely recognizable.

"Aw, let Scanlon tell the whole thing!" exclaimed Barney. "While I may have doped out some of the ideas, I wouldn't have got anywhere without him; besides, he's had the fun of bagging the game, and—how about Emily now——"



"Oh, hush, Barney! Let Scanlon tell what we are all aching to hear about!" interrupted Emily hastily.

Scanlon took out his pipe, filled it, struck a match, blowing it out immediately as he cast an apologetic glance at Emily, dropped the pipe back into his pocket, then cleared his throat.

"Why don't you smoke, Scanlon? Surely you don't imagine I would object!" exclaimed Emily.

"'Twill help me to talk a bit better—if ye are not mindin', thanks."

Scanlon brightened, and again produced his pipe.

"Oi've been puttin' carrds and spades together iver since mornin'," he continued, when the pipe was going good, "an' Oi'll do the best Oi can at tellin' yez about thim. Maybe Oi'd better begin with the slide; iverybody remembers that, exceptin' Barney, who came since then.

"Buffalo Hogan were super, with the devil's own luck at gamblin'; Bart, he were only shift boss, but he couldn't kape his fingers off the carrds. Oi've watched him play for years, an' niver a thing did he win but abuse an' harrd luck. An' on top av bein' a bum gambler, Bart were too good-natured an willin' to accommodate, an' it were not long afore Buffalo had him tight under his thumb—jist as he got Bud Hardy an' Windy Tuttle, an' Jim Kerr, him pfwat come back a week ago callin' himself Knucker, an' many another poor devil besides.

"Buffalo were playin' a long-winded game to get the mine away from the Molta Company. He kept complainin' that the ore were failin' and that the veins were playin' out; as Oi remember, he were mighty anxious to kape all crews out av the west drifts. Hardy an' the rest played to his hand ready enough, but Bart began to wake up.

"Bart, yez may know, were not a bit crooked at heart, but Buffalo played him foul by layin' a couple of sneaky

traps, an', belavin' that he were doin' a square favor, Bart stepped into them all unsuspectin'. After that Buffalo jist tells him to either obey orders or go to the pen for pfwat he had done. Bart, the poor devil, saw his fix, but he didn't have an out.

"Ivery onct in a while there were slides in the west drifts, an' when they happened Buffalo orders all the crews to the east levels. It were Kerr that caused the slide in B level stope, an' by Buffalo's orders. That's the time Hogan made the first mistake that tripped him; he niver told Bart pfwat were to come off. An' Bart, not knowin', rushed his hull crew into the stope with timber when the alarm sounded; he were goin' himself for more timber when she went in.

"How the devil Kerr iver got out alive an' unbeknownst to anny one Oi don't know, an' now he's too dead to tell us. Anyway, Bart an' Hogan had a big row; Buffalo's quittin' were only a bluff to make Bart super so as to kape him quiet. Ye see, Bart were ready to fess up an' take his medicine, but at the time Emmy's mother were a mighty sick woman, so he kept still for her sake—"

"But, Scanlon, poor mamma never knew papa was to blame!" interrupted Emily.

"That be jist the rayson he kept mum about it—to kape her from havin' to die with bad sorrow in her soul," explained Scanlon gently.

"Ye see," he continued, "Bart took the super job, smilin' like, but for five years he tried his best to break Hogan's grip. It didn't take Buffalo long to see that things were not goin' the way he planned, so he schemed to get rid av Bart for good an' all.

"When the scheme began to worrk, Bart were quick to suspicion Hardy an' Tuttle. He weren't quite positive, but to make sure he fired Hardy the first

chance he had; then trouble buzzed thicker'n bees on a honey thafe!

"Bud Hardy did all he could to stir up hard feelings agin' Bart around the mine an' town, an' Buffalo played a cat's-paw game av pizenin' the company's mind." Scanlon bent a meaning look upon Middleman, who fidgeted and mopped his face energetically.

"You can't blame me exactly," grumbled the president. "With half the prominent men of Molta reporting Carson's trickery and incompetence, and the output dropping worse and worse each year, how was I to know it was not his fault?"

"Tis not for me to say," replied Scanlon dryly. "Annyhow, knowin' different, Oi'll not argue the p'int.

"As Oi were tellin', Buffalo played to get Bart out an' Knucker in. His gang tried their best to have Bart kilt by accident; when that failed to work Buffalo decided to fix a trap that Bart would fall into an' hang himself.

"He planned the scheme out in secret with Hardy an' Tuttle, then he went to Bart an' declared he would call all bets off for the sake av one last favor. Bart pretended to give in, an' Hogan told him to tip off the next big clean-up the night before it were shipped.

"Right there's pfwhere Buffalo Hogan's puddin' began to scorch. He were so sure av himself he niver figgered that Bart intended to tip off the shipment to him an' warn the messengers at the same time. Neither did Buffalo figger he'd be double-crossed by Tuttle on the show-down, an' neither did Windy have sabe enough to do anny double-crossin' till his pardner butted in.

"Ye see, this pardner were a combination peddler an' thafe, stealin' for a livin' an' peddlin' to kape out av jail. One day he were tryin' to sell Barney some av his gimcracks, an' had them spread all over the desk. When he picked them up he happened to catch

the rayflection av the combination on the surface av his junk.

"Next day he had a long talk with Windy; then the pair av them planned to tap a clean-up themselves. It were an easy trick to do. Windy knew that Buffalo had a secret drift runnin' from old A level to that clump av bushes on the orroyo bank; nary a soul iver spotted the entrance for the way it were covered.

"Annyway, them two crooks tunneled from this drift to the assay house an' rigged up one av the slickest contraptions yez iver saw under the closet floor; they could raise and lower safe, floor, an' all whenever they felt like it. Not satisfied with that, they tried to make it look like Bart did the trick. Knowin' the feelin' agin' him, the two av them run their tunnel all the way to Carson's cabin, comin' to the surface right under the pantry cooler.

"Now yez can understand how come Bart to disappear so strange like the night Hemmerson had him cornered. The cooler were not nailed tight, an', havin' no support with the dirt gone below, it broke loose when Bart crawled into it, an' dropped him right into Windy's tunnel.

"Then old Pap, here, roiled up the mess still more because av a queer streak he took the night the gold disappeared; Cyanide saw him swipe Barney's gun from the saddle jist afore Barney started for town. An' it were Windy an' his pardner that caught Pap in the very act av shootin' at Carson's back when they were gettin' ready for their own trick.

"They were scared when the light went out, so they took the gun away from Pap an' snuck up to see if Bart were kilt. When they saw him slip out to look around they hustled into the tunnel an' did their job av stealin'; Cyanide heard their racket an' opened the closet jist as the safe were hoisted back to its place.

"The two thaves then hid the ingots under old Pap's cabin, not knowin' that Pap were lookin' on. Then what does Pap do but carry ivery last ingot back an' dump them in the pool, unbeknownst to annybody but Cyanide.

"Cyanide were kapin' an eye on the game because he had overheard Windy an' the peddler plottin' the scheme in the first place; an' when he saw how slick old Pap's crazy whim were spikin' the steal he tried to pull down a stake for himself without gettin' annybody in a jam.

"Yez can easy see pfwere Bart boosted Windy's chance by firin' the lusher for bootleggin' lick to the crews. The next slip av the cogs were when Bart got notice from Middleman that he were fired himself. His sneak-in' enemies had been naggin' him so long that he were all out av patience; he were gettin' that upset he imagined Barney were with the others in tryin' to down him. He went into high tantrums over the notice from Middleman, an', forgettin' that he had tipped Hogan the word afore the shot, he struck out for Frisco to have a final understandin' with Middleman.

"Buffalo had Bud Hardy and Windy Tuttle primed to hold up the mornin' stage from the mine, an' the two scamps were hangin' around town all night. Hardy happened to see Bart crossin' the freight yards, on his way to the depot, an' to square his own grievance he knocked him out with a club, took iverything he had, even his clothes, then chucked his body on a northbound freight. Bart's clothes go to Windy, who hides them in Pap's cabin, while Hardy takes all the rest to Hogan.

"In the morning Bud and Windy hike for the Narrows, with orders from Buffalo to leave Bart's note as evidence after the holdup. Windy, the old fox, goes through it all innocentlike, an' gets jist as howlin' mad as Bud when they don't find anny gold on the stage.

"Then, when they take the news to Hogan, there were a grand fallin' out among thaves. Buffalo raved like a maniac an' swore he'd been double-crossed by iverybody. After the row Bud got sore an' talked-too much, for which Hogan shoots him with Bart's gun an' sticks Bart's watch in Hardy's hand so's to get Bart out av the way for good.

"Then up steps Barney to solve the ~~key~~ to the hull riddle; there weren't another way under the sun to make Buffalo talk except that fortune-tellin' stuff. An' yez missed the time av your ives by not seein' how clever them show folks did it."

"Then it was the stolen gold that Windy wanted when he tried to choke old Pap?" put in Barney when Scanlon paused long enough to start his pipe afresh.

"'Twas that," answered Scanlon, testing the pipe's draft with a few preliminary puffs.

"Oi've heard some speedy talkers in my day," he resumed, "but that little show woman could spake faster'n a Burleigh drill runnin' full pressure. She took to Barney's scheme for bustin' Hogan like a fly to butter, but she were for doin' the trick her own way—an' she did!

"She had that hull bunch av flint-headed miners a guessin' all through her act. She were blindfolded while one av the professors called for anny kind av a question, an' the byes were puttin' them over fast.

"One feller asks, 'Pfwere do Oi go from here?' an' says she, 'Yez are goin' to zee Mees-tare Hoo-gan's to play zee carrds, an' yez are goin' to be var-ee lucky!' Then says she, real solemnlike, 'Oi can see a letter on a table in a city that is far away; it is addressed to Mees-tare Hoo-gan; Oi can only read its message in the crystal at midnight!' Buffalo weren't in the house, but he got

the news jist the same, an' swallowed the bait, pole an' all!

"Well, yez should have seen his actin' in that fortune-tellin' game at the hotel to realize pfwat a baby he were for all his bully-raggin'. He were mighty worried over Barney's threat about killin' him, for th' were the first thing he wanted the little woman to tell him about.

"The madame had the room all hung with black curtains an' red rugs an' snaky-lookin' joolry an' wooden-faced hoodoos an' a table with a big glass marble atop av a darnin' needle and stuck on the table. She made Buffalo sit on one side av the table an' she on the other; then when he asked his questions she cut loose with her spooky talk.

"Me an' the lawyer an' his stiney-grafter were hid behind the curtain back av Buffalo's chair, but we could peek through holes an' watch the hull show. By golly, 'tis me that thinks Buffalo suffered the tortures av hell while the little madame were tellin' him the stuff she said the gods were lettin' her see.

"Says she, 'A spirit has asked me for permission to spake to yez, Meestare Hoo-gan.' Buffalo looked shaky, but he nodded his head, an' the face av Peters without annybody appears on the curtain behind the madame, an' gives Buffalo a bawlin' out for killin' him.

"Hogan were upset bad, but held onto himself till Pap stuck his own whiskers in the curtain an' spoke a piece; then the big bully wilted. But he didn't do no talkin' till poor Canby's spirit showed on the curtain; then he went to his knees, bawlin' and beggin' like a baby.

"He offered her all kinds av money to save his soul for him, askin' her to have Peters an' Canby an' the rest forgive him, but she pretends to be sp'akin' in a trance until she had pulled the hull story from his ugly heart. Then she

tells him that to save his soul he **must** first square himself with an' honest confession——"

Scanlon ceased speaking, and leaned over to tap out the heel of his pipe in the hearth pan of the stove.

"And what did Hogan do after that?" asked Barney, breathless with interest.

"Well, to my mind, he wasted some good powder an' lead on himself, but I reckon the State's been saved the expense av a justified hangin'!"

"Did he—is he dead?" breathed Emily, her eyes widening in horror.

Scanlon looked toward Hemmerson.

"Yes," answered the sheriff, "Hogan went direct to the saloon and locked himself in his room; he died by his own hand and gun ten minutes before I got there with my warrant!"

## CHAPTER XV.

**T**HERE is just one more point I am curious about," declared Middleman as the party made a motion to break up. "Who drained the arroyo pool? Was it any one who knew the bars were hidden in it?"

Krause showed no memory or interest, Emily and the sheriff exchanged puzzled looks, Scanlon squinted wisely at Barney.

"I'm guilty of that," confessed Barney, "and if you won't condemn me for eavesdropping I'll explain how."

"To all appearances, young man, I am not qualified to condemn anybody in this case," replied Middleman, not unkindly, a note of sadness in his tone.

"Well, I was in my bedroom when Sutter put his twenty-thousand-dollar offer to you. Afterward I crawled out through a window and headed for Pap's cabin with Sutter's words buzzing in my ears. He told you the gold was hidden where no one could spot it, and when I passed the pool it occurred to me that water had a surface which left no marks over anything it covered.

"After I got back from Molta last night I had to do something to keep awake, so I cut a channel through the gravel bar and drained the pool. It was almost daylight by the time I let the water out and the lynchers were getting busy, so I discontinued my search until later. In the meantime you have been lucky enough to find the ingots yourself," concluded Barney with a droll smile.

Middleman did not return the smile.

"Then it seems that in my stupid ignorance and misinformation I have discharged a valuable superintendent and an extraordinarily bright young assayer. I wonder if it is too late to reverse my decision, especially if I announce that each position will command a thousand dollars more per year?"

Middleman's look added weight to his words as he bent a quizzical glance upon Barney.

"Before I answer for myself, let me ask what Sutter did—do I get the reward you have advertised for the return of the gold?" inquired Barney.

"To be sure you do!" responded Middleman heartily.

"Very well; please make your check payable for that amount to the three Marvels——"

"Jist a minute, lad," interrupted Scanlon, extending to Barney a roll of bills, "here be the money yez gave them show people; they refused to accept it. They refused to take a cent for showin' up the dirty murderin' robber!"

Barney eyed the money meditatively. "Did that slide make any widows?" he asked at length.

"Six—an' one av them be dead now," answered Scanlon.

"Then, Mister Middleman, just make five checks of a thousand dollars apiece and payable to each of the five widows; that will satisfy me. As for staying on my job"—he stole a furtive glance at Emily—"I prefer to wait until—until Carson gives his answer."

Hemmerson went out with the president, followed by Scanlon and Krause. Barney would have gone, too, but Emily detained him with a question about her father.

"How did you come to find him—and why were you wearing his clothes?"

"I found him in the mine; the reports in town had it that he was hidden there, so when I drained the pool I started out to hunt him. The night he disappeared through the pantry is when I discovered the secret tunnel, and I got into the mine through it. He was all in and delirious when I found him and I packed him on my back as far as the pantry trap; then hoisted him up with your clothes line.

"After I got him to bed, the proposition of getting a doctor bothered me. I was afraid to leave him alone until I caught the idea of disguising myself in his clothes; in that way I fancied I could make a dash for help and lure the mob out of harm's way at the same time. I was trying to figure out some means of disguising my face and hair when two shots were fired; then came a lot of yelling in front of the cabin. I grabbed your father's automatic and looked out the back door in hopes of getting the deputies to help; but the gang saw me first, and—well, you know the rest."

Emily toyed with her fingers in silence without looking up. Barney failed to interpret the sign; he sighed his weariness, both of heart and body, he wished she would say a word in defense of his act, but she didn't, and he reopened the door.

"Are you coming to breakfast in the morning?"

"Very likely," answered Barney from the back porch.

"And—Barney."

Her finger went to her teeth. He paused on the lower step, with downcast eyes.

"You have kept your word—are you

going to be unkind just because I wish to keep my word, too?"

"If I've been unkind, forgive me; you have a perfect right to keep your word," responded Barney sadly as he stepped to the path.

"Goodness, Barney!" petulantly.

"You are awful dense for a man who has just made such brilliant discoveries. Must I tell you again that when you proved papa absolutely innocent——"

She could not say more. A bandaged face bent over her own; her lips were sealed!



## THE RETURN

JOHN RAYMER was weary. The day at the office had dragged, leaving him too much time for thoughts that turned again and again to his deserted home. More than two months had passed since Sylvia had gone, leaving only a brief note to tell him that she was going back to her mother's home because she felt that he was too much absorbed in his business to need her. To Raymer the accusation had seemed unjust. His pride, too, prevented him from offering explanations or excuses, and so he had merely written that she must decide for herself, though a welcome awaited her whenever she chose to return. At first he had missed her happy, light-hearted ways, but by constant effort had learned to check, in their first onrush, the horde of dismal thoughts that sometimes attacked him. To-day, however, a strange, brooding influence seemed to numb all his faculties and he had come home depressed.

He tried to read, he tried to write, and once he decided to go to the theater, but as he pictured himself alone in the throng of pleasure seekers he shrank from the thought, and after wandering aimlessly about the house finally seated himself on the veranda, where he remained until long after the moon had risen.

How often he and Sylvia had sat there, looking out upon the moonlit scene and peopling it with fairies, but now the shadows looked weird and lonely, and the fitful swaying of the trees in the soft summer wind wove grotesque patterns of light and shade upon the grass. He tried to shake off the sense of oppression, but seemed powerless even to move, and yielded to the drowsiness stealing over him. Then in a whisper, faint but distinct, he heard Sylvia's voice calling: "John, John!" and, clad in soft, misty garments, she floated before him.

He started forward, then sank back in his chair, not knowing whether the vision of Sylvia had been a dream or a part of his waking consciousness. Dazed and motionless, he listened as the old clock in the hall, with slow, measured strokes, like the tolling of a bell, proclaimed the hour. As the last tone died away Raymer spoke: "Twelve."

The sound of his own voice broke the spell, and, rising from his chair, he strode toward his room with determined step and went to bed.

When he wakened the next morning the sunlight was streaming in at the window, and he lost no time in dressing for his day at the office.

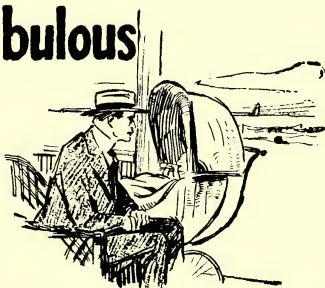
As he approached the breakfast table he saw, in staring black letters upon a yellow envelope lying beside his plate, the fateful word, "Telegram." With trembling fingers he opened it and read:

"Sylvia passed away at midnight calling for you."

# The Bibulous Baby

BY

Tod  
Robbins



THE strangest event in my life happened last summer," said my traveling companion. "I have only ventured to tell this story to my wife and brother. It is so unique and apparently so beyond human belief that if I published it broadcast I would be looked upon by the world as an impostor of the first water."

"And did your wife and brother believe you?" I asked.

"Well, not exactly. Yes and no. They believed that I thought I was telling the truth. The one imagined that the tale sprang from the effects of strong drink; the other blamed the strength of the summer sun. But I assure you it was neither. I had had a few glasses of absinth, certainly; but I have been accustomed to this drink since childhood. The sun, indeed, was very hot; but it was as nothing compared to the heat I have experienced in the tropics."

"The story, doctor?" I ventured.

"Ah," said he, "you will laugh; but nevertheless I will give it to you. Mirth is the reward one gets from the world

when one gives something new to it. People laugh entirely too much, and smile only with their lips. Look into a man's eyes—they alone are the true mirrors of emotion.

"On the fifteenth of last August I was living at a seaside resort not far from the city. It was the warmest day of the summer, and the people had taken to the water. Sitting on the veranda of the hotel with a glass of absinth on the arm of my chair, I could see the blue expanse of ocean stretching out from the beach like a velvet rug lying on a floor of whitest marble. Not a breath of air ruffled that placid surface; not a wrinkle of thought rested on the calm forehead of the sea. And above it the sun hung stationary in the heavens, resembling an open porthole of a burning ship seen through the blue haze of evening.

"On the beach, men and women were running about, caricaturing by their grotesque, awkward movements the play of children, as grown people do when they attempt to cheat Father Time. In the water, round objects

could be seen bobbing up and down like pieces of cork, and it seemed strange that these little globes should be moving about, guided by the brains that they contained; and stranger still that, if one should suddenly sink out of sight for several moments, a great excitement would turn these shouts of laughter into screams, these movements of animal joy into gesticulations of horror.

"Sitting all alone on that hotel veranda, I continued to sip my absinth and to meditate on the scene before me. Suddenly I saw a very pretty young girl approaching, pushing a baby carriage before her. The child was evidently sleeping and was concealed under a canopy of mosquito netting; the girl looked longingly out to sea, while two lines of irritation furrowed her forehead.

"Acting on a sudden impulse, I spoke to her: 'You'll pardon me, but couldn't I be of some assistance? I see that you like bathing, and it's quite a wonderful day for it. I could take care of the baby while you have a plunge.'

"She hesitated and again looked out to sea. 'I'm very much obliged,' she began, 'but mother told me to take care of'—at this she hesitated, and I thought I saw her face darken—'of my little brother,' she finished.

"'But I could take care of him for a time. He won't be any trouble. He's fast asleep.'

"'Yes, he is asleep,' she said, lifting the mosquito netting and looking down at the little red face lying on the lace pillow. 'Thank you so much; I think I will go in bathing.' And, wheeling the baby carriage up beside me, she turned and hurried off toward the bath houses on the shore.

"Again my eyes returned to the bathers, and my hand lifted the glass of absinth to my lips. How black and tiny some of the heads looked far out on the water! Here, in this bathtub

of the city, life was a precious thing; yet there was an abundance of it, a superfluity of it. I had been in thinly populated countries where it was not thought of so highly.

"'I beg your pardon, sir,' said a voice beside me which sounded like a key turning in a rusty lock, 'but I'm very thirsty and absinth is my favorite drink.'

"I turned about in surprise, and was thunderstruck to see that I was apparently still alone. No one stood back of my chair; no one was behind the pillar on my right, and no one crouched behind the baby carriage, as I had first suspected. But as I stared about me the voice again spoke in its strange, quavering tones.

"'Lift up the mosquito net over the carriage,' it said. 'It's damnably hot in here!'

"Almost mechanically I did as I was told, and in a moment more was looking down into the little, red, wrinkled face of a baby. As I gazed at the shapeless nose, at the bald head and loose-lipped mouth, the eyes opened and looked up at me. What I felt then you can never imagine, my friend; I cannot describe it to you. I can only say that it was horrible—horrible past belief. I had expected the frightened, innocent stare of awakened childhood; in place of it I saw the vicious, knowing leer of wicked old age. With a cry of horror I reeled back and put my hands before my eyes.

"'Well,' said the voice again, and now I knew that it, too, was old—as old as an echo in a haunted house; 'well, my young friend, do I get a taste of your absinth or not?'

"'What are you?' I cried as soon as I could speak.

"'Young man,' said the baby, squinting evilly at me over his blanket, 'I'm about the driest child in the world. Do you know what I've been getting to drink lately? I've been getting milk



—milk from a dirty, blue-nosed bottle! Everybody takes advantage of me because I'm too old to kick up a disturbance. Why, my own grandchild—the one who was wheeling me just now—takes advantage of me. Family pride is all very well, but what is getting me is I've only got four more weeks to live, and I might as well be a live one till the very end.'

"Just a moment," said I, taking a long drink of absinth to steady my nerves. 'Now you can tell me everything. You may unburden yourself to me as though I were your father.'

"Well," he snarled, 'if I tell you the story, will you empty the milk out of my bottle and fill it up with absinth?'

"Yes, readily," I answered.

"So I'm selling my family pride for a bottle of absinth," said he. 'Well, no matter, here it goes. My grandfather owned a large plantation before the war. Like many another Southern gentleman of that time, he preferred the joys of the body to the joys of the spirit. Wine in plenty, women in plenty, tobacco in plenty—that was his idea of life. But there was one thing that worried my grandfather.'

"What was that?" I asked.

"Old age," said the baby solemnly. 'It was his one fear. And when it finally came—when gout laid hold of his feet and time pulled out his hair—he was a pitiful object to behold. Lying on his back, he cursed life and said that it started from the wrong end; that if men were born old and grew younger year by year, then they'd have something to live for, instead of cursing every day that came. And on the night when he died he sold his soul to the devil, or so my old negro nurse used to say. On the following morning I was born.'

"And how long ago was that, my little friend?" I asked.

"Eighty-five years ago last Decem-

ber," said the baby. 'Of course I can't remember as far back as that. My first recollection is of standing before the mirror while my mother combed out my long gray beard. Yes, I had a beard then; and they say it was snow white when I was born. But when I remember it first it was gray—a beautiful silver gray. That was a long time ago, and I wish I had one now.'

"And yet, even then I wasn't happy. I'd try to get the old men in the village interested in blindman's buff and tag; but they wouldn't play with me and I felt lonely. People began to talk when they saw me rolling my hoop in the street or playing marbles with the boys; so mother had to tell them that I was an uncle of hers in his second childhood, fearing that they might guess the truth. Sometimes the old men would beckon me into the tavern, buy me some absinth, and, when I had drunk it, send me home tottering on my feet.'

"And so time passed. Gradually I grew taller and stronger; the gray began to fade out of my beard in patches, and mother was now thought by strangers to be my sister. I no longer played marbles with the boys or rolled my hoop along the pavement. No, now the girls whom I met on the street would make my heart beat all out of tune. But they never looked at me; or, if they did, they would say, 'He is old enough to be our father,' and pass by. But there was one who said, 'What young eyes he has!' I married that girl and settled down with the optimistic belief that nothing could shatter my happiness.

"But the years went by, and each one that passed made me younger and my dear wife older. Finally we met on the tide of life, each drifting toward a separate goal. And we could not hold each other. We passed by swiftly, unable even to clasp hands. I must have suffered then, yet my hair lost all its gray; I was growing to be a com-

paratively young man. And I had children, and they soon grew older than I; and they had children, and they grew older than I—till now all that is left me is a taste for absinth, the taste that I acquired when the old men used to send me home from the tavern in the days of my drunken, gray-haired childhood. How I used to cry when they wouldn't play marbles with me!

"Ah, well, ah, well, now I'm eighty-five and a baby with the tastes of an old man. Yet they won't give me my absinth, and expect me to say nothing about myself because of family pride. It seems I am a monster—something to be hidden away in a perambulator. Ah, but the ladies give me privileges sometimes which they'd scarcely give if

they knew my age! I have four more weeks of life. How do I know? Why, the doctor of the hotel examined me this morning and said that I am just four weeks old. But give me your absinth, sir. Don't take advantage of me because I am old and helpless."

"And did you give him your absinth?" I asked.

"Yes," said my friend, "I filled his milk bottle with it. He was so weak that I had actually to put the nipple in his mouth. Then I went up to my room, leaving him sucking peacefully. Four weeks later I read his death notice in the paper. Well, what do you think of that, sir?"

"I think it is quite remarkable," I answered.



## THE INNOCENCE OF SIN

THEY met at the salon of Madame Trudell, where gathered intellects without hearts, bodies without souls. But her eyes were clear and blue and innocent, and she talked of flowers—while he possessed a brow of saintly mold, fingers long and clean and fine, and his hobby was the exploration of ancient monasteries.

As he bowed over her hand his glance took in the rich fullness of her neck and bosom, and he inwardly exclaimed in anticipation. Her eyelids drooped, letting their interested gaze linger on the creaseless front of his waistcoat.

Two hours later they were alone in the shadowy conservatory, seated beneath a dwarfish upas tree. Her head was on his shoulder, one soft arm about his neck; the virginlike lips met his in an ecstasy of triumph as he held her to him, his fingers gently stroking the back of her hair.

There was silence. Each seemed under the spell of some immediate crisis.

"How easy!" he said to himself as he unloosened her emerald dog collar.

"Men never outgrow the need of a nurse!" she thought as she slipped the diamond-studded watch from his waistcoat pocket.



# The Seventh Glass

By J. U. Giesy



IT was very nice and clean in the convalescent ward of the hospital where Max Zabern sat. The beds were clean, and the floor was clean, scrubbed to a spick-and-span neatness by the hands of the hospital women. And the nurses were clean—those sure, positive, yet gentle, nurses. The doctors were clean, and their instruments displayed a glistening cleanliness beyond criticism. Max had noticed all along the clean food on clean dishes so unlike the food of the trenches. And even the sunshine which came through the windows was clean. There was a very smell of cleanness in the air. So it was very pleasant there in the convalescent ward, even though one had lost a piece of a hand.

In fact that made it pleasanter still in a rather odd sort of way. It meant that a man would not need to go back to the trenches, the dugouts, the slattern food, the roar of guns, the constant peril by day and night, the icy mud of winter or the choking hot dust of summer. It meant an end of all that—those things of which Max Zabern had grown woefully weary, deathly sick, before a bit of grenade had torn away half of his hand and so sent him to be healed in body and somewhat in spirit, in this

clean different place, where women's voices in sympathy or direction had taken the place of an *oberofficer's* gruff and oftentimes brutal commands.

The dressing hour was past. Max lifted his bandaged member and inspected it through the faint haze of the pipe he was smoking. The bandage was clean, too. It had been put on less than thirty minutes ago, and the surgeon doctor had pronounced his wound practically well. That meant that he would soon be discharged. And then he would go home.

Home! A rather far-away light crept into Max Zabern's blue eyes at the thought that leaped into his brain. Yes, he would go home and—*Gott*, that would be good! His slightly widened pupils seemed to see the little village where he had been born and raised and had grown to manhood. He saw the homely houses, the little fields, the wooded slopes of the Alsatian hills. He nodded as he smoked. *Ach, Gott!* It would be good to go home—down there where it was quiet—away from the thunder of the guns. Not but what he had been willing enough to do his share in the war. He was not a coward. When the war came he had laid down his hammer in the little smithy

which was his; had untied his apron of hide and hung it on a peg, and, shouldering his rifle, had marched away quite as a matter of course—quite as he had always known he would if war should come. It was a part of a German's duty—to fight for the Fatherland—part of the citizenship which was his. It was something to be accepted, just as one accepted the sunlight, the day and the night, birth, life, death, when those things came to one, too.

But that was over. Death had struck close to him, yet passed him by. He was unfit now to serve the Fatherland in the trenches, hence there was no reason why he should not go home and become one of those who kept things moving back of the lines. The badge of his crippled hand would show that he had served. He would go home and open the smithy and put on his apron again. He had seen his hand as the surgeon dressed it. It would suffice for a good deal. He could still work. Only—a little frown came up between his eyes—it would not be quite the same, after all, down there, because, although Max had gone first, his father had gone later, and had fallen in the very first trench into which he had been sent. And—his mother, the Alsatian woman, who had never been quite all German like husband and son had been, had died during the two years since Max had untied his apron and marched away.

Marie had written him about that—Marie Cirey, who lived with her old mother on the outskirts of the village. She had written to say his mother was dead; that she would take care of her grave until he, Max, came back. That was like Marie, Max thought. She was a sentimental creature. After one had spent two years in killing men and seeing them killed and burned rather than buried, or rolled like cholera-stricken hogs into trenches and covered with a few spadefuls of earth, one grave

seemed a very little to make a fuss about. But—Max had known Marie ever since they had played together as children, and it was like her to put in that about caring for a woman's grave when she wrote to that woman's son. Max had not shed a tear when he received that letter. Death had grown too common. Yet, oddly enough now, he found himself wondering if Marie had wept by the grave she had tended. Probably she had. It would be like her—yes.

She was a pretty thing. She would make a fine mother of children, and the Fatherland was going to need many children. A slow smile grew on Zabern's lips. He had always liked Marie before the war, so when he went home he would see her and possibly—

There was a slight commotion at the end of the ward. Max turned his head, forsaking his daydream of the future for the present. There was a knot of officers just inside the door, stern-faced men, clad in close-fitting tunics, on the breasts of more than one of which the iron cross showed. They were speaking to the nurse in charge of the ward. And now she lifted a hand, pointed directly at Zabern, and drew aside.

The officers advanced. Their heavy feet rang loud in that place of soft-footed quiet.

Max rose to his feet, startled, questioning the reason for their coming, and then he stood at attention, his hand lifted to his close-cropped head in salute.

"You are Max Zabern?" The cross of the order of merit hung beside the cross of iron on the speaker's breast.

"Herr, ja." Max found his voice well-nigh sticking in his throat.

"The doctor tells me your hand is well?"

"Herr, ja."

"Good!" The officer turned on his heel. "Come. We must find a place to talk."

Max followed down the ward. Once more one of the uniformed men addressed the nurse in charge. "A private room," he demanded gruffly and moved off behind her lead.

She opened the door of a room, and the officers crowded in. Zabern followed, and stood waiting, still at attention. "Take him, Kummer," said the man who had addressed him first.

A captain, trim, almost dapper, dark, thin-lipped, with eyes which seemed to Max to search him swiftly, measure, and appraise him, now fixed him with a stare.

"Your usefulness in the army is ended, I understand?" he began.

Zabern lifted his bandaged hand. "Three fingers and a part of the bones behind them, Herr," he replied.

The officer nodded. "So I have it already." He waved the answer aside. His thin lips retracted slightly. "That is the reason they give you to me. You're of no further use to them. But the intelligence service needs brains more than hands. How are your brains?"

"As good as ever, Herr," Zabern said. And suddenly he thrilled. This dark, slender man with the eyes of a hawk and the lips of scant mercy was an agent of that service which bulwarked the army's blind force—which learned impossible things in impossible fashion. What could he have to say to him now in so unexpected a way?

He was not left long in ignorance, because Kummer kept up his questions: "You come from Alsace?"

"Herr, ja."

The captain mentioned a name. It was that of Max's own village.

Once more Zabern gave assent.

"Born there—lived there always?"

"Herr, ja."

"Know the people—all of them?"

"All who were there when I joined my command, Herr."

"So, then," said Kummer. "Since you

are no longer physically fit for a soldier, there is another way in which you can be of use. Listen. The damned French are getting information from somewhere behind that sector of our line. I think it's coming from your town and it's got to be stopped. I could send a man down there, but I'd prefer one who knows the people—the district—and I knew you were here and about ready to go back. Well—go ahead, and when you get there find that source of the enemy's information and report it to the nearest command."

So that was it. What a wonderful thing the intelligence service was! They had even known he was here, nearly recovered, and that he was from the village where the French had planted a spy, as it would seem. That was how the Fatherland kept count of its men. That was efficiency—to use the wounded, no longer able to fight, to find out those who might be seeking to hinder the fighters who could still fight on. And for this they had picked out him. He was not so useless, after all. He could do something. He squared his shoulders to an even stiffer attention. "It is an order, Herr Captain?" he said.

"It is an order," Kummer repeated. "*Herr Gott!* What else? Find that dirty spy."

"And report to the nearest command?"

"Yes."

Max saluted. "So soon as I have my discharge," he accepted.

Kummer nodded. "That will be arranged." He turned and began a low-toned conversation with one of the officers who had come with him while Max still stood at attention. And presently, without so much as a glance at Zabern, they all left the room, clanking out with heavy feet and a rattle of side arms, just as they had clanked in some time before.

Then, and then only, did Max relax

his rigid position, in which he was beginning to sway slightly because it had been weeks since he had stood like that. He left the room and went slowly back to his chair—where he had been sitting when Kummer and the rest had come and sought him out.

He would go home and meet every one he knew. He would inquire casually about any newcomers, any strangers. He would see Marie and ask her if any strange people had come to the village since he left—and how long since they arrived. Marie would know, and she would tell him, of course. She was a simple thing, always laughing, as he remembered her in the past. And she had always been like that. Max smiled now, a slow smile, as he recalled how as a child, when they roamed the hills together, she had sung and danced this way and that, while he had followed more slowly, more in stolid fashion; how her browned little legs had flashed among the grass and weeds, her brown hair waved, her brown eyes glanced back at him, and her red lips smiled. To-day it seemed to Max she had been like a little brown butterfly then, fluttering hither and thither, while he plodded along and watched. He must meet her, seek her, indeed, to thank her for caring for his mother's grave.

Later in the day the nurse in charge of the ward told him he had been discharged. He was given his clothing, his cap and coat. She told him he was to report at the nearest railway station and make himself known; that his transportation had been arranged to his home.

Max said good-by to the nurse and several of the men in the ward and marched away to the station, where he found everything just as the nurse had said. That was Kummer's work, of course. Max smiled as he took a seat in the train. How everything worked out—how everything fitted in just like

the cogs in a machine. It took clever management to bring about such perfect system, but the men at the head of all this *kriegspiel*, this war game, were clever. What fools the other peoples were to resist them. The High Command was bound to win in the end. But meanwhile there was a spy to be caught down there where he was going, and he had been chosen to catch him and thereby bring so much nearer the "certain" victory, which the High Command would gain.

The railway did not pass through his village, but that did not matter to Max. He was hardened to walking miles, after two years of life with haversack and blanket roll and rifle upon his sweating back. He got down from the train and watched it disappear, then turned along the highway at a swinging stride, trudging forward, head up; and after a time he began to sing—one of those marching songs he had sung with his comrades in those first weeks of the war, when their gray-green ranks had swept down across northern France; before Von Kluck's flank had been bent and edged south and east from its encircling move toward Paris, and the whole wonderful advance had stopped, lapping like a human flood against a human bank and then drawn sullenly back in the ebb of a human tide.

So, singing at times, at other times silent, he made little of the miles, until at length he came to the crest of a hill and gazed down on the village, which lay beyond him. That was home.

Home! Max paused and drew a deep, lung-filling breath, and allowed his eyes to rest upon the scene—the houses nestled in the little valley, protected by the wooded shoulders of the hills on the farther side where the road mounted again like a crooked, grayish white ribbon among the green of growing things.

Many times during those first weeks two years before he had pictured the

scene to himself. The *heimweh*—the “home longing”—had nagged him then, yet now that he stood here there seemed no real reason why it should have been so. The village was the same. It was home. He had never known another. Yet it was not home really, for his father was dead and his mother also. Max felt almost a stranger as he began the descent of the road to the familiar place, the sight of which had brought back all that had been and was not now and made it all horribly real. In the shock of war he had scarcely realized just what it meant—was going to mean. It came to him now with an almost crushing force. He was coming home, but without any hope of that welcome of which also he had thought in those first weeks when the *heimweh* gnawed.

But his eyes traveled faster than his feet, and soon he could locate a house set some distance back from the village, a stone house with whitewashed walls. There was a garden behind it, and farther back still a little wood, and Max knew that back of the wood was a meadow. In front of the house, he could catch the red and white and pink of hollyhocks growing on upstanding stalks—like the ranks of gayly-trapped soldiers—just as they used to do two years before. The home of the Widow Cirey and her daughter Marie! Max quickened his steps, and came at last to the house and paused. A path ran in from the road between the stiff hollyhock stalks, and a great white goose, thrusting its head around the corner of the house, gazed at him out of yellowish eyes and hissed an inquiry. Max put his feet apart and stared back. He grinned. There was the spirit of the Fatherland in that goose, which hissed a challenge to the stranger who would set foot on the soil of its home.

Then while he stood there a woman appeared. One would have said she had noted the posture of the great goose

and came to investigate the cause of his actions. She saw a man at the end of the hollyhock rows, paused for a moment, while her eyes went wide with a wondering recognition. Then she was flying toward him down the path.

“Max! Max Zabern!” she cried.

Well, here was a welcome, Max thought, and he put out his uninjured palm. “Good day, Marie,” he said, quite as though he might have seen her but a short time before.

Marie Cirey paused and placed her hand in his. “What brings you back, Max?” she began, and then caught sight of his bandage. Her face altered swiftly, became solicitous in its expression. “Oh, but I see! You are wounded, hurt. The poor hand!”

“Part of it shot away,” said Max. “One-handed men are not fit for the *kriegspiel*. That is a two-handed game.”

Marie touched the bandage tenderly. “Then you are back to stay?” she returned slowly, with a little warmth of color creeping up into her cheeks.

“Yes, but now. I stopped here first.”

The girl’s eyes lighted. She took hold of the strong, bronzed well hand and began pulling upon it, smiling upon him as he remembered she had always done since a child, urging him up the path. “Come,” she cried. “You must go in and say good day to mother and tell her you are back.”

“She will know that when she sees me,” Max made literal answer. But he smiled, too. Marie’s touch was soft and warm, and she displayed a strong, supple figure of a woman under her plain, coarse dress.

She was still smiling and her eyes were dancing as she continued to pull him along between the hollyhock rows with their white and red and pink bells.

He followed her around the side of the house to a door which gave entrance to a room he remembered very well. There was the same old table and chairs and a sand-scrubbed floor. On one side

a ladderlike stair led to a sort of loft, and in a corner a second series of steps ran down to a storage cellar. There was a cupboard full of dishes and a stove, and between two closed doors was a clock on a shelf.

A woman was sitting in one of the chairs, mending a stocking. She was small, rather withered, with wrinkled cheeks and faded lips, but a pair of bright brown eyes shone under her neat gray hair.

"Mother," said Marie, "here is Max. He has lost a part of a hand and come back."

The woman in the chair glanced up. She rose slowly. One noted that she did not stand wholly erect. "Sit you, Max," she invited. "We are glad you are returned, and it is seldom we have a visitor nowadays."

"So?" said Zabern, sitting down. This looked like a very good opportunity to begin his work. It could not have fallen out better. "Then there are few people coming and going these days, mother?"

"Some are going," Marie made the answer; "the last the village can send."

"And no outsiders come to it?" said Max.

"No. Why should they? There is nothing for them here," Marie's mother returned in a quick, almost staccato voice.

"There is a very pretty maiden," Max rejoined in rather blundering fashion, with his eyes on Marie's face.

Marie laughed, while her color deepened. "*La!* They taught you to be bold in the army, didn't they, my friend?"

Max grinned. He spent an hour telling of his life in the army before he left to go on to the house which had been his former home. "To-morrow I shall come again," he told Marie at parting. "And I shall want you to show me my mother's grave."

The girl sobered on the instant. Her eyes grew soft. "Max!" she exclaimed. "It will be lonely. Stay here to-night with us."

"Marie," said her mother. "Max will want to look over his people's things—and possibly visit his smithy. You forget yourself in the pleasure of seeing an old friend. He will come to-morrow again."

"Yes, I will come," Max promised, and went away. He felt a trifle puzzled that Marie's mother had not wanted him to stay. Marie was very glad to see him, but he wasn't so sure about her mother. Well, after all, it was Marie in whom he felt an interest. The old woman didn't really matter so much.

He entered the village, greeted a former acquaintance here and there, and came at last to his father's house. It was empty of life, but the familiar rooms were just as they had been left after his mother died. In a way it reminded Max of some of those homes in Belgium and northern France from which the owners had fled—homes he had seen during the first weeks of the war. He had his supper at a neighbor's table, and later that night went back and crawled into the bed in which he had slept before there had been a war. And he slept as he had learned to sleep during the past two years. In the morning he entered his little smithy, which stood on a corner of the same plot as his house, and in the afternoon he went to see Marie.

She led him to the little burial ground up on the side of the hill and to a grave, built around with stones that her hands had placed, until the rectangle which they marked was more like a bed of flowers than anything else. She knelt down beside it, while Max stood. Her eyes were moist as she raised them to his. "She wanted so much to see you," she said. "And all I could do was to promise her to write



and tell you the best way I could. It was this dreadful war killed her, Max."

Zabern nodded. "*Gewiss*," he said. "I know. She never could forget the time when Alsace belonged to France, though then she was but a child. She loved France more than the Fatherland, I am afraid."

Marie shook her head. "But she loved you and your father more."

Again Max nodded his head. "It was very good of you to tend the grave, Marie," he mumbled.

"Good?" Marie rose. "Could I do less for her, my friend; for a woman of Alsace?"

For the third time Max nodded. "*Ach*, yes, that is so," he said.

They turned away, leaving the little burial ground to its quietness, and after walking a little way seated themselves on the side of the hill, where they could look down on the village. "Tell me," said Marie; "how the war really goes. Are you still winning, Max?"

"Yes, of course," Zabern replied.

Marie laughed. "But you haven't won yet?"

"No, not yet." Max shook his head. "But when Verdun falls."

"*When* Verdun falls." Marie drew back her red lips, showing her firm white teeth.

Max frowned. "I was forgetting," he said. "You are like my mother. Your mother, too, cannot forget when Alsace belonged to France. But—such talk is forbidden, Marie." She was just as she always had been, he thought; always laughing, always teasing.

"Forbidden? Why, Max?" Her hand fell on his. "What have I said, except what you said before me?"

"It wasn't what you said, but the way you said it," he replied.

"I jested, of course." Marie caught her breath and turned her face away. She was somewhat pale as she sat staring off across the valley.

Max watched her. "It is not well to

jest about such things," he said in a voice which had grown a trifle thick. "But let that pass. You are like your mother, and my mother, too, it would seem, but—could you be still more like my mother was when she was young like you—could you love a German, Marie?"

Very slowly she turned her head, and her lips smiled softly. "Being your mother's son, you are only half German," she teased.

"So?" Max accepted. "Well, yes, that is true. But I am one who has given his service to the Fatherland, as no one can question. As my wife you would be safer—no one would question you then."

"Question me!" The girl's eyes widened swiftly. "Why, what do you mean?"

"Nothing," said Max, and told the truth. He had meant merely that as the wife of one who had served she would be in a position assured. "So, then, will you be my wife? We have known one another since we were children. Will you be my wife, Marie?"

Hot color dyed her cheeks. She bowed her head.

"Marie," he urged.

"*Ich liebe dich*," she faltered, hardly above a whisper, and flung up her head and turned her face to his. "Oh, Max, I never knew you *cared*."

Max told her the truth. "I did not know it myself until I knew I was coming home. Well, then, when shall it be? My hand will not keep me long from work."

Marie considered. "After the war," she decided at last.

"*Himmel!*" Zabern grunted. "After the war? Why not now?"

Marie met the question smiling. "Oh, now *mein lieber*, there are things about which we would not agree."

Far over the hills beyond the valley appeared a number of dots. They looked like a covey of birds at that

distance, but they came rapidly and swam above the valley, crossed it, and passed above man and girl with a rattle of whirring motors, to flit down the afternoon sky toward the west.

"Fokkers," said Max. "Coming from Strasbourg likely."

Marie nodded. "They pass here all the time."

"How far are the nearest enemy lines?" Max inquired.

"About sixteen or twenty kilometers. Quite often one may hear the sound of the guns."

"So? As close as that?" Max scrambled up and helped her rise. He was not at all displeased with the afternoon. One really relished the apple one climbed for the most, and he had made good progress for the first day home. He looked at the girl with an almost proprietary glance as they turned back toward the village. If it had not been for the mission on which Kummer had sent him, he would have been quite happy in a stolid sort of way.

But that mission was something not to be forgotten or delayed, and since Marie seemed to have failed him as a source of information, it appeared necessary to find another if he could. He went with her to her home, watched her flit up the path between the hollyhocks, turn to toss him a smile, and vanish into the house. He went back to the village and renewed some of the acquaintances of two years ago.

Though he questioned as casually as he could, careful always not to appear too anxious, he was unable to learn of any one unvouched for about the region, and made his way back to his home in a state bordering on disgust. He lay awake for a long time that night after he had retired, turning the thing in his brain, and after a time he thought that perhaps he was coming to understand. The Fokkers which had flown over the valley that afternoon first put the thing in his mind. Kummer had

said the information was going out from back of this sector of the line, hence if there was no one here who might be suspected of sending it, then the spy might be somewhere else in the region. If Fokkers could fly west, allied air craft could fly east. They might even do so at times to meet their man and return with what he had learned. And—they would probably do that at night.

Therefore Max formed a plan and put it into operation. Making his hand the excuse for not opening his smithy as yet, he began to take long marches about the district always on the watch, yet always ready to stop and chat with any one he met on the chance that some dropped remark might give him the clew to the person he sought. He found, and made himself known to, the nearest garrison back of the lines, but he did not find the source of the information which Kummer had said was leaking out.

On two evenings of the week following his return he went to Marie Cirey's home and sat talking to the girl and her mother. Marie was frankly glad to see him, and their position of man and sweetheart leaped rather than grew into an accepted fact, now that it had found expression in words as it had that afternoon on the hill by the burial ground, when the Fokkers flew over their heads and on into the west. Marie laughed at him, teased him, was always finding some excuse to touch him with her hands. And the second night she followed him outside and kissed him before he went away. Yes, Marie was very glad to have him come.

But as regarded Madame Cirey, Max wasn't so sure of his welcome. More than once he found the older woman watching him out of her sharp brown eyes above her work. Indeed it seemed to Max that she regarded him at times almost with a suspicion which she never expressed in words. It was as though

she was asking herself some question about him, not yet decided in her mind. It rather puzzled him if he let himself think about it, for she had never seemed so distant in the past when he had come to her home, or when, as an awkward, somewhat bashful youth, he came to see Marie. Then she had always appeared as glad to see him. And now she seemed actually ill at ease because of his presence. Max thought it rather odd.

Still—he had more important things to think about. He was failing in the work to which he had been assigned. He pondered it again that night as he trudged home with Marie's kiss warm on his lips. He had meant to be clever, but he had done nothing, and the thought annoyed him. He frowned; then stopped where he was, and his frown relaxed. Kummer had selected him, had said the information was going out from his part of the region. Kummer must have had some sort of rather definite knowledge. Therefore, if there were no strangers to be learned about, there was only one other conclusion to be reached, and Max reached it by a slow and sure process. Somebody not a stranger was sending the enemy word, and since Kummer had sent him *here*, Kummer must think it was *here* he was needed.

Though stubborn, somewhat stolid, Zubern was not a fool. He saw now where he had gone at the whole matter wrong, even in the time of his search. He must watch, not in the day time, but at night. He went toward home, stopped for a moment at his nearest neighbor's, then went on to his house, lighted a lamp, let it burn for a few moments, and then blew it out. He did not go to bed, but sat until every light in the village was dead so far as he could see. Then he slipped softly out into the starlit night and stole, not down the street, but back into the fields.

A rattle out of the air came to him

where he lay stretched upon the grass. Max knew it, for he had heard it many times. It was a Fokker flying over. It passed and died away. Another came and went; Max could see them, dim flitting shapes against the stars. He lay there until a faint light crept into the east, then rose, regained his house without being observed, and slept late.

Another night and another he watched, and on the fourth there came a whirring out of the air. But now it was different—as different to the ears of one who had been trained to read it as the tones of two different pianos.

Max stiffened. This was not a Fokker. The drum of its motor had a wholly different note. And suddenly that drumming died. Plainly the pilot had shut off or his engine had stalled. Max lifted his head and searched the sky for the shadowy outline of the machine. All at once he saw it dimly, sliding silently down, down, until it passed below the lip of the hills and was lost.

Zubern had marked the line of the hills where it had disappeared, and, rising, he set off in that direction. He passed beyond the end of the village, and then went more cautiously, lest any noise should make known his approach, straining his ears for any sound from the vanished plane.

All at once the staccato pound of a motor suddenly sprang to life. Max stopped and stood rooted to the ground. The rising whirl came from beyond him; from back of the dark mass of a tiny wood, and then the aeroplane was up, above the trees, shooting up and away in a long, rising slant, like some great night-buzzing beetle in its flight.

He knew now where it was. The little wood was that which stood between the meadow and the Widow Cirey's home, and the aeroplane had made a landing in the meadow. It was a very good place, and that the pilot had found it in the night showed some-

thing like previous knowledge of its existence, Max thought as he ran toward the wood.

He soon reached it, paused again, and glanced about before he entered its deeper shadow. Suddenly he crouched down, seeking cover as instinctively as some skulking thing of the wild, for his eyes had caught the pin point of a light. A light in the village at two o'clock in the morning was not a usual thing, and there was only one place about here where that light could be—a window in the little loft of the Widow Cirey's house. It was stationary, steady. The thought flashed into Zaber's brain that it could be seen a long ways—from an *aéroplane* perhaps. His heart began beating slowly; his breath stuck in his throat. He turned away from the yellow ray and sought to pierce the shadows of the wood with his gaze.

His ears gave him warning first. Something was moving among the trees! There was a soft dragging. Max let himself down and lay upon his belly as the sound approached. But he did not think in a conscious way. His mind seemed for the time a blank—all its powers centered in the senses of hearing and sight.

A shadow detached itself from the background of the trees and advanced slowly on a line which would pass just beyond the point where he lay. It was the figure of a woman, bent halfway over, so that her hands might seize and hold some object she was pulling along through the grass and weeds. Intent on her task, she glanced neither to right nor left, but seemingly down at what she held.

Half on his hands and knees, like a creeping creature more than a man, Zaber followed, ready to drop down and lie flat if she should chance to look back the way she had come.

The woman reached the Cirey house. Max heard the door open, the noise of

her burden being dragged inside with a soft, muffled scraping, then the door was closed. What might have been a full minute passed before the light in the window of the loft went out abruptly, and the whole thing was suddenly as though it had never occurred.

Max straightened from his crouching position, and stood alone in the night with a little breeze fanning about him. Now he knew what he had been trying to find out, and as he made his way back across the fields toward his house he understood why Marie had questioned him in teasing fashion about the war; why when he had said she would be beyond question as his wife, she had asked him in an almost startled manner what he meant. Knowing what she was doing, she had certainly thought for the moment that he might suspect or might have heard something about it in the village. It was plain now, too, why she had said she would marry him after the war, because before that there would be things about which they would not agree; why Madame Cirey was always seemingly ill at ease when he sat in her house at night. Oh, yes, Max understood it all now, and he had to admit it was clever in a way. The Fokkers were always flying over, and the meadow back of the woods was a secluded spot. But for the training of his ears he might not have picked out the different rattle of the engine of the allied *aéroplane*. Another hearing it would have passed it by, as it came only at night, when the village slept. He must be certain, and—he must think.

He regained his house, and sat down in his unlighted room. He turned the thing over with slow logic in his brain. He must find out the details, and be able to make his report beyond any chance of mistake. At length the same animal cunning—which had caused him to crouch to earth and which had kept him silent and watchful where another might have spoken or given some sign

to warn the one upon whom he spied—came again to his aid.

The next day he opened his smithy, and in the evening went to call upon Marie. She was glad to see him, and Madame Cirey was far more cordial than she had been before. Quite plainly the *aéroplane* came to the meadow only at intervals, he decided, and it had come last night. He glanced at Marie. "Verdun has not yet fallen," he remarked.

"No, not yet." Marie smiled.

"I am not sure that it will ever fall," Max declared. "Still—they are sending in several new divisions."

Marie did not meet his glance directly. "How do you know that?" she inquired.

"Oh, I know—many things." Max nodded. He was following out the line he had laid down for himself, planned out that day while he worked about the smithy. "There is much I could tell. One hears things even in a hospital, Marie." And suddenly he sat up and took his pipe from his teeth and leaned toward her. "Yes, there is much I could tell if there were any way of getting that knowledge where it would do the most good; if"—he sank his voice—"there was a way to get it to—the people who hold Verdun."

"Max!" Marie Cirey sprang to her feet. Her eyes widened swiftly. Her lips parted. Her bosom swelled, and she raised a hand to her breast and held it there while she stood staring into the face of the man. "You——" she said in a whisper after a time.

"Marie!" Madame Cirey spoke from where she was sitting, beside the lamp, with the mending over which she seemed always busy.

Max turned his glance and found her eyes, dark and bright, upon him, her colorless lips set into a shadowed line. He held out his crippled hand, now free of the bandage, almost clawlike with its remaining finger and thumb.

"See you!" he exclaimed. "Do you think I forget this? And you must not forget that my mother was of Alsace, even as you, Mother Cirey, or that I am her son. What if I have fought in the German army? Could I do anything else, I who was a German subject? Had I a choice? Think you I may not have a choice now as to what I shall do? My hand I have given to the German, but"—almost unconsciously he voiced a paraphrase of Kummer's thought, spoken days before—"may I not now give my brains elsewhere if I so will?"

"And your brains could give information if there was a way to—use it?" Marie said quickly, before her mother could speak.

"Ja," Zubern's blue eyes did not waver as he made the reply.

"But——" Marie laughed. The sound was more that of nervous emotion than of any humor. "Did you not tell me that even to jest of anything contrary to German expectation was forbidden, Max?"

"Ja," he said again. "It is forbidden. One must decide whether he will obey."

"That is true." Madame Cirey caught up his words. "One must decide. And if there was a way to—use it—you would give—information?" she said slowly at last.

Zubern nodded. "Ja. I would give it now and you could write it down."

"I?" Marie caught her breath. Again her lips parted and her eyes went wide and her face a trifle pale.

"You, yes. You could give it to the *aéroplane* when it comes again," Max said.

And after that there was silence. Marie Cirey's face grew paler still, but her widened eyes did not falter, nor did she change her position, though her interlocked fingers gripped possibly closer the one upon the other until their backs grew white. "You—know?" she breathed in a sibilant whisper at length.

"I told you I knew many things." Max nodded his head.

"Who else—who else knows?" Marie's mother broke in with a question which quivered tensely. She laid down her work and sat staring at Max with her sharp brown eyes.

"No one, I think," he told her, and explained about the difference in the sound of the engine. "I was sleepless, and was walking the fields. I heard it come down, and started to find out about it. It flew away before I reached the meadow back of the woods, but I saw the light in the loft, and I saw Marie."

"You saw me! Why didn't you speak?" the girl exclaimed.

"I might have startled you—made you afraid," Max returned. "Besides I was surprised. I went home and thought. I made up my mind and came here to-night. What was in the thing you were dragging, Marie?"

"*Taubern*?" she answered him in a word.

"Carrier pigeons," Max nodded. "Why so then we can write out what I know and send it off at once. It is important. That is better than to wait for the *aéroplane*."

"It comes only to bring the pigeons now and again. Mother?" Marie's last word was an appeal, a question. She turned toward the woman by the table.

Madame Cirey's glance rested on the face of her daughter, shifted, and seemed to search the heavier features of the man to whom the girl's heart was pledged. "It is what the pigeons are for, my children," she said after a time.

Marie nodded. She sprang up, smiling. She found paper, very light and very thin and very strong. She brought it back to the table, close to the lamp, and drew up a chair. "Tell me, Max, tell me, while I write it down," she prompted, and, lifting her eyes, ashine

with emotion as he came to her side. "Oh, Max, isn't it splendid, when the body may serve the heart in its wish?"

"We will tell them of the new divisions to be sent in at Verdun," Zabern said. "Write what I say and be sure that you get it right."

In ten minutes it was done. Max had read it over, and Marie was rolling it up to be inserted in a quill for transmission. There was a great joy to-night in her heart as she carefully twisted the paper in her fingers, and there was a light in her face, a smile on her soft lips as she turned again to Max. "Come," she invited. "I shall show you where our little messengers are kept safe from prying eyes."

She led him to the steps that ran from a corner of the room into the cellar. With his hand in hers, she guided him down, bade him stand where he was until she found and lighted a candle, and gave it to him to hold. Then, while he watched, she approached the wall of the cellar, which was of rock, laid hold of a stone, and wrenched it out of place. Two other stones she removed in a similar fashion, and exposed a cavity in the earth, behind the wall. From this she dragged a wicker hamper which she set upon the floor. A rustle came from it—a sound of motion. Marie lifted the lid slightly, thrust in a hand and drew out a fluttering bird. While Max held this, she lifted the hamper back through the wall and replaced the stones. They put out the candle and went back up the stairs.

While Max watched, Marie affixed the tiny quill containing the message—that useless message which Zabern's strategy had suggested he should offer to send as an evidence of good faith. She took the bird in her hands and kissed it on the head, and over it with her lips against its plumage she looked into Max Zabern's eyes with her woman's soul in her own. "Come," she

said, and rose. "Come, Max," and led him out of doors.

It was quiet there, quiet and dark, with a soft air blowing through the valley. Standing close beside him, holding the pigeon, Marie waited a moment, then tossed it into the air.

It fluttered and rose—was gone—lost to their vision in the night.

The woman turned to her companion. "Max," she whispered, "Max, dear—there isn't any reason why I cannot be your wife when you wish it. Kiss me, Max."

Zabern drew her into his arms. She was soft, rounded, yielding. "So you do not wish to wait until the war is ended?" he said in a voice which, though heavy, still shook as he felt the nearness of her form.

"Not now," she told him, with her lips on his. "Before—I could not have been your wife, and still have done my work for France."

"So that was it?" he muttered. She was a simple, honest little thing. She wouldn't give up her work and she wouldn't marry him and try to do anything against him or his or live a lie.

"Of course, stupid!" She laughed.

"Stupid I may be," said Zabern, "but I can understand a thing when I hear it. To-day I opened my smithy. I must see the results of my work."

Five minutes later he left her and turned along the road toward the village. He went slowly, because his feet lagged as he thought. He had meant to be clever to-night, and he had been. He had been very, very clever. He had fooled both Marie and her mother with his talk and that message of no value to those who would receive it, and he had learned all that Kummer had told him to find out. Still, he felt no elation in that; rather he felt something like a dull, gnawing pain.

Marie had been very sweet—very, very sweet—while they stood there in the dark outside the house. And her

body had been so soft, so yielding as she lay against him. Every line of her feminine presence had cried to him in a voiceless appeal, and she had said she would be his whenever he desired. And he desired her, wanted her—as a strong man may. But he had told her he must first see the results of his work. There had been a sinister double meaning in that, which she did not suspect—which he had not meant her to even dream of. Only now he asked himself what the result of his work would be—not the work in the smithy, as Marie had thought, but that other work to which he had been sent by Kummer—that work which he had been told to do for the Fatherland, similar in its way to the work Marie was doing for France. Max Zabern clenched his one strong hand as he walked, and lifted his face to the star-sprinkled sky. "*Herr Gott!*" he questioned. "What is a man to do?"

Yet, even while he questioned, Max Zabern knew. Always he had been trained to obey. And was not the "certain" victory for which the High Command labored, a greater thing than the hunger of a human heart? Did not the needs of the High Command come always first? Had not he, Zabern, seen homes disrupted, men torn from wives, sons—yes, and daughters from mothers—in northern France and deported to do the work set them by the order of their conquerors? Pitiful, yes, if a man let himself think about it, but a thing brought about by the exigencies of the situation—by their own people's foolish resistance to the Fatherland's designs, and decreed by that same High Command which, through the person of Kummer, had set him also a task to perform. Kummer had said to his question: "It is an order." So, then, what was there to do but obey? What use to argue past that?

He was up and off with the first faint light, trudging along the road, away

from the village with a face grimly set, toward the nearest garrison command.

He was back by the middle of the afternoon, somewhat hag-ridden by the knowledge that behind him a *vicefeldweble* and four men were headed for the village from the town to which he had gone. He entered the smithy and looked around. There was nothing to hold his interest there. He went into the house and sat down. But the room was hot with the afternoon sun, its air close.

He left it and went outside again and glanced up the street. No sign of the soldiers yet. Presently he turned back and gained the fields behind the house—those fields he had crossed two nights before, when the enemy aeroplane had come down back of the little wood behind Marie Cirey's home. He moved slowly across them now, and after a time, as he drew nearer the wood itself, he bent and went forward, skulking under such cover as he could find until he gained it, and had hidden himself behind a tree, from where he could see the little whitewashed house.

An hour passed while he stood there, shifting from one leg to the other. The sun was hanging just over the western line of the hills. And then he saw them—the *vicefeldweble* and his four men, five dusty, gray-green figures plodding heavily along the road.

They reached the whitewashed house, turned, and were lost to sight. Max could picture them passing between the rows of stiff-standing hollyhocks with their bells of pink and red and white. Then once more he saw them coming around the house. He saw them halt, saw the *vicefeldweble* knock upon the door, saw the door open and the five men pass from sight.

A sudden weakness, such as he had never experienced before, came into his legs as he saw them vanish. His knees knocked together and he sank down to a sitting position without taking his eyes

from the house. He began to breathe like one who has run far. After a bit he edged about the tree so that he could get his back against it, and sat flat-legged, watching for the five men to reappear.

What were they doing? What was going on inside the whitewashed house? Why didn't the men come out with the women they had come to take?

By and by the sun went quite down behind the hills and twilight fell. Still the *vicefeldweble* and the four privates had not reappeared. Zabern's eyes began to blur from the strain of his watching, and he rubbed them with his fingers. Why didn't the men come out? He commenced to feel a vague premonition of something amiss as the twilight deepened and the house became an indistinct mass. It struck him as very odd that they should have gone into it on such a mission and not come out.

Then he saw a light. It flashed from a window of that room where he and Marie and her mother had sat last night. He drew a deep breath. That was better. There was a sort of dumb reassurance in the light leaping up like that.

Very slowly he got to his feet and began to go forward through the grass and the weeds where he had seen Marie dragging the hamper of pigeons toward the house. He walked slowly, bent half over despite the cover of the darkness. Now that it was night he decided to see what was going on inside the room where some one had lighted a lamp.

By degrees he made his way quite to the house, sank down, and crept to a place beneath the lighted window, lifted himself, edged his head above the sill, and remained staring with starting eyes into the room.

It was occupied by a very strange company, Max thought, indeed. When he first caught sight of them he felt sure that he understood the reason for their delay in coming forth. The *vice-*



*felfeldweble* and his attendants were still in the room. One of them had fallen on the floor, the *vicefeldweble's* head was sunk down so that it lay on the table. One of them was lying back in his chair with his jaw somewhat sagged, as though he slept in sodden slumber, and another had slumped down drunkenly where he sat.

That was odd enough in all conscience, but there was more yet to see. There were bottles on the table and glasses—one before each man's place—empty glasses—five of them in all. And there was a lamp on the table not far from the farther end—the same lamp beside which Madame Cirey had worked on her mending last night. And Madame Cirey was there at the end of the table now, so that the lamplight shone on her face. And she was smiling—smiling very queerly indeed, Max thought, and nodding her head, like one who bowed to this one and that of the *vicefeldweble's* men, who plainly didn't see her at all. And in front of her Max now noted a bottle, similar in every way to those others on the table.

So much he saw, and then quite suddenly he ducked down, because Madame Cirey lifted her face, and her eyes, very dark and seeming to glitter strangely, looked directly toward the window where he stood. Squatting against the wall of the house, Max frowned as he pondered what he had seen, the five men and the five empty glasses and the old woman nodding her head and smiling at her end of the table close by the lighted lamp. But there was no sign of Marie. What had become of her? Abruptly Max rose and passed with a heavy stride to the door, threw it open without so much as rapping, entered the room, and paused. "What does this mean?" he cried.

The woman at the table turned her withered face. Her dark eyes peered toward him. She simpered in a hideous way which showed her age-darkened

teeth back of her bloodless lips. "Ah, Judas!" she quavered shrilly in recognition. "We have been waiting for you, Judas." She gestured toward the men about the table with a withered hand.

And those men were dead! Max knew it, knew it now that he saw them more closely. The aura of their dying hung in the closed-in atmosphere of the room as a faint taint in the air. In a stride he reached the simpering woman's side, seized her by her arm, and shook her with the impulsive fury of the realization. "What happened? What happened?" he cried.

Her eyes, hard, dry, bright as the eyes of a mind unbalanced, lifted to his face. And again she leered. But she said no word; merely stared upward at him, with that horrible grin stretching the lines of her mouth and wrinkling her cheeks.

Zabern thrust her from him, so that she fell into her chair. His glance searched the room, came back to the *vicefeldweble* and his men and the five empty glasses before their places on the table. They were dead. But it was not to learn that that he had come. Once more he turned to the woman, who seemed watching his every action. "Where is Marie?" he spoke in gruff demand.

And now the woman by the table gave vent to an insane cackle. She nodded at the *vicefeldweble* and the bodies of his men. "Ask them," she said, and nodded again as she spoke. "They know."

"*Herr Gott!*" Zabern burst out. He twisted about on a heavy heel. There was no sense in the woman. She was crazy, to tell him to ask five dead men in answer to his question. He hurled himself in a rush at the closed door of a room he knew was Marie's bedroom, threw himself against it, and burst it open, peered into its small dimensions with pupil-widened eyes, reached the

bed, and flung his arms across it gropingly, thrust a heavy leg and thigh beneath it in search of a crouching, hidden body, and found nothing, turned and dashed out of the room.

The woman still sat where he had left her. The simper had come back to her face. Her dark eyes met his, and she turned her head so that they followed him as he plunged into the other bedroom, failed once more in his search and came out.

He leaped up the stairs to the little loft where the light had burned the other night, reached the head, and stood peering into the shadows of the place. "Marie—Marie!" he called softly, and, gaining no answer, turned about and went down more slowly, while the woman at the table still watched.

He moved now in the clutch of a growing impression. The attitude of the old woman and her manner, the strange silence of the place and the presence of the five men were affecting him very oddly. They all breathed of something far more dreadful than he had touched as yet. And there remained but one place to search. The cellar! Suddenly Max knew that there he would find the answer to his question. Because the old woman had said the dead men knew, and—he had given very complete information to the commander of the garrison that morning; he had even told them how to find the pigeons back of the wall; the *vicefeldweble* had known just where to search when he came.

He caught up the light from the table, crossed to the cellar stairs, and went down, with the light lifted to throw its rays before him. He found what he sought at last.

The hole in the cellar wall was open. The hamper was out on the floor, and beside it was the form of a woman clad in a mere clinging shred of clothing, through which the beauty of her fair young body gleamed. She lay in what

seemed a tortured huddle, her dark hair tangled about her face; the glaze of her dead eyes glistened as the lamp-light struck them through her half-open lids, and across the bared whiteness of her body was a fearful sight—a great, gashing stab, which had nearly severed the breast before it entered her heart, from which the red blood was gushing.

"*Herr Gott!*" The words burst from Max Zabern's lips while he knelt and covered his eyes. After a time his lips moved again: "Marie!"

Horror—sick, blind horror—seized him. He turned drunkenly to the stairs, lurching and stumbling on their treads as he fled from that scene of ravished innocence to the room above.

The old woman was in the same place. Yet it would seem that she must have moved while he was below, because now, in addition to the bottle Max had noted beside her, he saw two other glasses, fresh and unsoiled by use.

Max replaced the light as she lifted her hard, bright eyes. "Did you find it, Judas—the result of your work?" she leered.

The result of his work! *Heliger Gott!* The woman was quoting the very words he had spoken to Marie last night—to Marie, who now lay in the darkness of the cellar with her soft body gashed open, beside the wicker hamper. He drew back a pace, but without shifting his gaze from those eyes which seemed some way to hold him. "My work?" he found himself saying thickly.

The woman nodded. "He"—she pointed to the *vicefeldweble*—"told me, Judas. It was because of that I waited for your coming, because there could be no doubt you would come to see the result of your work."

A cold perspiration broke out on Zabern's forehead. His hand felt

clammy and damp. He opened his lips as though to speak, but uttered no sound.

"Sit down, Judas," the woman said.

Her eyes still held him, and he obeyed and sank into a chair.

"They came," the woman went on. "They found the pigeons where you knew they were kept. But there was something else more to their liking than pigeons, Judas—a woman—a fair, young woman—just one for five human beasts. They drew lots for her, Judas. You remember the soldiers cast lots for the clothing of Christ, but these soldiers drew lots to see who should be the first to smirch the bloom of virtue in a little human flower. And"—she rose quickly, leaned over, and spat into the dead face of the *vicefeldwebel*—"he won."

"But she fought," she said, sinking back. "You should have seen how she fought to protect that for which they had drawn lots. But—I am forgetting—you have seen that, haven't you, Judas—how she fought? She fought so hard that afterward they were thirsty from their work and demanded wine of her mother—the woman who had borne her for such a fate. I gave it to them, one bottle, two, three; you can see them on the table. I gave them a fourth, this one here beside me, which, knowing the German thirst, I had prepared while they were busy with the others. Only—the last, Judas, was not quite like the first. Into it I had put some of that substance I kept to kill other vermin in my garden. And after they had drunk it they became very tired—oh, very, very tired, as one may see from the postures into which they have fallen here about my table, where I have sat waiting for you. Because, you see, Judas, I knew you must come. It was but natural that you would be somewhere watching and would arrive when these other vermin of hell failed to reappear. And now that you have

come, Judas, will you share my—hospitality?"

She lifted a clawlike hand and laid hold of the neck of the bottle. "See, Judas, here are two other glasses besides those five soiled ones from which they drank. Five for them, Judas, one for you, and one for me. Seven in all. And there is wine—not much, but enough. Will you drink with me, Judas, of this wine, which will make you forget—many things—and give you—rest?" She broke off and sat staring at him above the slanted neck of the bottle in her hand.

But Zabern made no reply. A hand seemed gripping his throat, choking his breath back into his chest, where his heart was beating slowly with dull, heavy strokes. It was an icy hand which appeared to have slipped up back of his jaws, defying any articulate answer to the woman's words.

"Come, Judas—will you drink?"

"*Nein!*" Suddenly Max found his tongue. He sprang to his feet. He had for the moment but one thought, one wish—to get out of this room of death, to get away from those dark, insane eyes under the gray hair in the midst of that wrinkled, leering face.

A cackle of mocking, sardonic laughter broke forth in the room. "No!" clucked the woman. "No!" As abruptly as her laughter had begun, it was checked. She rose, lifted an arm, and pointed to the door. "Then go, Judas—get you gone—to the hell of your thoughts—from which there is no escape—except—to drink—and forget!"

Toward the door Max Zabern flung himself, dashed through it into the night, running, running, running with heavy feet which pounded dully away from the whitewashed house, toward the woods, and blindly through them, to the meadow where the *aéroplane* had come down before he checked his course.

At last he found himself sitting in the little burial ground beside a rocked-in rectangle of flower-planted earth—that grave which had been so carefully tended by Marie. “*Mutter*,” he said dully; “*mutter!*”

Hours passed, wherein Max lived over his life, his childhood, boyhood, youth, and manhood, leading back along the path of the years to this night and the horror of the whitewashed house—the horror from which he had fled here to his mother’s grave, cared for and tended by the hands of the girl he had betrayed.

Judas, the girl’s mother had called him, her mind unhinged by that same horror which she had witnessed in all its dreadful details, because what had come to pass was the result of his work. It was to that he had betrayed her like that other Judas; betrayed her with her kiss upon his lips.

Kummer would be glad of that, glad of that horror, glad to know it. He would consider it but another incident in the progress toward the final fruition of the plans of the High Command. The High Command! Who were they? What right had they to order things which swept aside all the principles of human goodness, compassion, mercy, decency, right; which controverted all the standards toward the perfection of which man had been striving for centuries past; which took husbands, fathers, sons and made of them brute beasts to blindly do their bidding because it was “an order” to be obeyed; which sent him here to crouch in the night beside the grave, feeling that the name of Judas was one deserved because of the horror which had resulted from the work they had sent him to do?

He lifted his face and gazed at the star-sprinkled heavens. His mother was dead. This was her grave here, which Marie had tended. His father was dead, because the High Command had needed him in their plan. Marie

was dead, and the *vicefeldwebel* and his men. They were dead, too. And he sat here in the night, alone now in all the world.

By and by as horror had driven him forth, so horror led him back. There was something like a dreadful fascination about it. It seemed to call him, draw him to what it held. He found himself wondering what he would find on his return; if the old woman would be still sitting there at the table with her bottle of wine and the glasses, staring at the dead men out of her dark, bright eyes.

He approached it from the front, passing along the path between the hollyhock rows and so around to the rear.

A faint gray light was stealing up over the eastern hills, but the lamp still burned and the door was open, just as he had left it in rushing forth hours ago. The old woman still sat in her chair, but her head, too, had fallen forward upon the table, beside the bottle and the lamp, and—there was a sixth soiled glass where there had been only five before.

Max nodded in comprehension. He understood. She had not waited for his return after he rushed out to that hell of his thoughts, the remorse which had torn at his breast all night like the fangs of a wolf. She had drunk her portion of the wine.

Walking on tiptoe, he crossed the room and lifted the lamp, then went softly to the corner where the stairs led down to the cellar. He crept down slowly, made his way to the body, beside which he knelt and held the light above the motionless face.

A sound fell on his ear. It came from the hamper on the floor. Max approached it on his knees, and lifted the lid. A pigeon crouched within, looking up at him out of yellow-brown eyes. He took it in his hand. For a moment he thought it odd that the *vicefeldwebel* and his men should have left

it alive, but then he understood that it had been of far less interest to them than the girl whose tender body lay beside him here on the floor.

Catching the pigeon between the clawlike finger and thumb of his ruined hand, he took up the lamp and made his way back up the stairs.

He knew where Marie had kept her supply of paper and the quills. He had seen her produce them the night before. He found them now and a bit of pencil, and sat down to write. Very slowly he formed the message he wanted to send—the story of what had happened in the whitewashed house. He rolled it up and put it into the quill and affixed the quill to the pigeon, just as Marie had done.

His mind went back to the dead girl beneath him on the cellar floor. The lamp was dying now, its flame smoking and guttering out. The gray light of morning was to his sickened fancy a funeral pall. There was even a chill in the air. There was the chill of death all about him.

There was one way to escape the hell of his thoughts. That was to drink and forget. The old woman had said that just before he had rushed forth into the night. And what had that other Judas done when his work had been finished?

Very slowly he drew the unused glass and the bottle to him. Still holding the pigeon, he lifted the bottle and poured out the wine. It filled the glass and ran over on the table in a dull red flood—as red as blood—as red as the wound in the white breast of the girl he had betrayed.

The pigeon, held fast in his hand, sat warm against his flesh. It turned its head and watched him out of its yellowish-brown eyes.

"To the High Command!" said Max Zabern, and drank—the seventh glass.

The fingers which held the pigeon relaxed; it stirred. Then, finding itself freed from all restraint, it spread strong, sure wings, and, as Zabern's spirit passed his cold lips, flew out of the open door.



#### OUT OF SIGHT

**I** AM standing within a few feet of several hundred people, but I cannot see any of them. You said it is sad to be blind? Ah, yes, you are right; it is sad to be blind. But I am not blind, my friend; I am standing in a cemetery.



# The Conqueror

By

Robert W.  
Sneddon



**I**F ever there was a quaint pair of companions, it was Richards and Graham who used to frequent the Café d'Harcourt on the Boulevard St. Michel, Paris.

When Richards had been younger, he had wooed the spirit of Poetry. Now he devoted himself entirely to the Green Lady Absinth. At the café the students and their friends used to wager upon the number of glasses he would consume in a night. Graham knew of this wagering, and it annoyed him strangely, but habit being stronger than friendship he stuck to his pallid cadaverous friend. He was the one intimate Richards kept, this shabby ape-like English ex-jockey who ran a tiny billiard room in a side street.

Graham tolerated Richards because out of the growing confusion of his brain came certain biting morbid truths which made him laugh. Richards was a sharp one, there was no denying, even if he did talk like a madman, and lately his mind had been running on

the grisly terrors of death—terrors to be kept at bay.

As for drinking, beer was his tippie. Only one of a pair of pals could go in for absinth.

Queer-looking fellow, Richards. Thin, with high cheek bones showing under the tautly drawn skin; the corners of his lips sagging and weary. Only his eyes were alive, though they seemed too large for the sockets. He let his hair grow too long and hang untidily over the collar of his old velvet jacket. Too busy drinking and raving to pay attention to his appearance. But clever as they make them. Graham used to tell him:

"Damme, if only you'd give up the booze, you'd knock em' all to bits with your writing."

Nothing he could say did any good, however, and he was alarmed to notice that his friend was growing more cadaverous, more taciturn, climbing out of their sphere of communication, and he had, already begun to cast about in his

mind as to the advisability of breaking off the association.

He looked at Richards to-night. There was a curious abrasion on his forehead. He had drunk his fifth glass and yet he was not affected by it. The bony hand which held a cigarette on the level of the marble table trembled slightly—that was all. The eyes were motionless. What did he mean by that empty soulless gaze at the mirror? It was more than queer: it was depressing. Nobody comes to a café to stare, and silence is uncomfortable after half an hour. The silence was unbreakable. He must be going. This was a fine way to pass an evening. What was he watching? What did he see? It was getting on his nerves. He must speak. He must ask, and before he knew he heard himself say:

"What's the idea—watching that mirror? You're always staring at it."

Richards started, shuddered and replied slowly:

"Because my beetle is there. That's all, Graham, all."

"What beetle are you talking about? Some new pet?" Graham said with a relieved sigh.

It was only a beetle which attracted him—something crawling. He opened his mouth in a laugh but checked it suddenly as Richards turned on him with a frown.

"What is it, old man?" he demanded anxiously. "Anything wrong?"

Richards turned his head slowly away and resumed his staring.

Graham's spirit rose in rebellion. Was he going to let himself be treated with this contempt? Whatever had possessed him to pal up with this crazy man? He ran over the reasons in his sullen mind, but at this hour none of them seemed logical.

"Look here, Richards," he commenced coarsely, the blood mounting to his forehead, "none of that with me.

Surely I'm a damn sight more interesting than any beetle?"

Richards turned sharply and looked at him. His hand rested on the edge of the marble top and he drew his forefinger up and down it as though deriving a sensuous pleasure from the cold contact.

"I'm sorry, Graham, I should feel sorry to lose you. You'll forgive me, but this beetle of mine——"

"Yes, what about him?" asked Graham, shaking off his grievance.

After all, Richards wasn't such a bad chap. Bit dreamy, and had to be humored.

Richards looked at him earnestly.

"Graham," he said slowly, "I think that in your narrow little penthouse of a soul you understand me."

Graham nodded. That was a queer beginning, but no doubt well meant.

"If that is so, you can see something of the working of my brain. Not it all—eh?"

"You're a bit above me at times," Graham mumbled.

"Then let me tell you of something which happened to me the other day——" He hesitated with an appealing glance from his projecting eyes.

"Oh, go ahead," Graham assured. "Do you good to tell it."

"I was wandering. I get fits of wandering through the day. There's nothing to do—and I like to moon about till evening and the café. Have you ever felt that the daylight was full of horror? As if a great searchlight was beating its questioning rays on your naked soul and showing its deformities to a sneering world? The city is no place for me then. It is full of shapeless things with the bodies of men—and women. Decayed senilities—pretty outsides of creatures ripe to the rotting. Empty skins that have held conceit of beauty. All these rustle past as you walk in a city—I seek the country when I feel like that. It is fresh, and the air is pure,

clean and wholesome. One day last week I went to—I don't know where—I don't know if I should recognize it again if I saw it. Ah! Ah! There he goes!"

Graham started, as Richards' glance went eagerly to the wall.

"Yes, yes," he said as if to a tired child, "I see."

"They have marshes there; I remember the marshes best of all. There was a little blue flower which held out its friendly hands to me. And there was a stone wall. Green mosses grew along it. I nearly trod on a lizard——"

He stopped inarticulate.

Graham yawned behind his hand.

"What about the lizard?" he asked lighting a cigar hastily. "What did it do, old man?"

"You see when I saw *him* lying there, I felt inclined to run away. I wish I had."

"Him?" Graham interjected with a sudden shudder.

"The body," Richards emphasized, "I wish you'd listen."

"I am, but you said nothing about a body."

"Didn't I? Well, the body was lying there in the shadow of the wall. I thought he was sleeping till I bent over him. I almost began to fancy I had murdered him. But I hadn't. Why should I? I had no grudge against him, so I couldn't have killed him, could I now, Graham?"

"Oh Lord, no!" ejaculated Graham. He put his hand up to his brow. It was wet. Decidedly this fellow gave him the creeps. When was he going to give that cynical grin of his, and croak? "I frightened you that time, eh?"

"Still there he was lying," Richards monotoned. "His hat had a dent in it. I shoved it off with my cane, and it rolled a little way. It had a red silk lining with the letters W. G. R. in gold stuck in it. My initials, Graham. Queer, eh? Some hairs sticking——

Wasn't a pretty sight. I turned him over. One hand was clutching the grass. Have you ever imagined seeing your dead self? It's funny. I laughed. It was so ludicrous that I should be looking at myself lying there with a hole in the brow—just there. Then it made me quite sick. I felt ill when I thought that I had laughed."

Graham shrank away from him.

"That was the curious part of it. There were three of us: The dead man, the man who laughed, and the man who wondered and felt physically ill seeing those other two. I couldn't make it out, and the sun shining down so brightly. Then all at once as I looked at the dead man—his face changed—it wasn't me—it was another—some one I didn't know. Queer thing I didn't think of the risk, they might have come and found me there—thought I had dirtied my hands with murder."

"What did you do? Did you leave him?" Graham asked, licking his lips nervously.

"It was then I saw my beetle creep from the hat. See, there he is—over there—on the wall."

Graham looked sharply in the direction of the pointing finger. For the first time he realized that there was a real beetle which crawled stealthily up and down the wall. He shuddered.

"Good Lord! Good Lord!" he quavered, gazing at Richards with eyes which asked mutely and found no answer.

"That's the little fellow—my little soul. D'y'e understand, my soul," Richards continued in a whisper. "He's always there when I come into the café. I have to take great care of him. When he goes, I go, too—like that."

He snapped his long fingers as though snuffing a candle.

"When he left the hat I knew him for myself. A crawling creature. That's he. That's me. He knew where



to come to find me—eh? Crafty—cunning. He is king of them—king of the beetles."

Graham tried to rise. His limbs refused to move. He seemed to be bound hand and foot, seated looking through a peephole into a chamber whose vaulted darkness was peopled with unknown horror.

"King of the beetles: he'll conquer them all even as I will conquer this crumbling frame of mine. I'm not afraid of the struggle, yet I come here every night to watch him, guard him. But why should I? If he has to fight let him fight it out himself: my champion against death—death." His voice rose to a thin whisper which seemed to master the noise of the café.

Graham felt it strike on his ear and recoiled as though from a blow. He was suddenly impelled to look at the wall. He knew he must shriek and could not. It was as if he had been planted on a desert isle with this madman, remote from human aid. From the corner of the mirror another black thing—a second beetle—was descending with menacing approach. He glanced at Richards and found his face was working convulsively.

"It comes, Graham!" he seemed to say, though no sound came from his lips. "It comes!"

Graham turned his back the better to see what was going to happen on the wall. It held him intense. He recognized the first one—Richards—by a tiny red spot on his back, quite perceptible at that distance, and by some freak of the imagination, the mark reminded him of the hole in the skull.

The beetles met. They recognized that they were foes, for with a spasm of ferocity they engaged, fastening their strong mandibles about each other's legs. It was a wonder they did

not fall from the wall. Once Richards' one dropped a few inches, Graham started as he heard his friend give a low laugh. Was it possible he had confused the two beetles? He would tell him his mistake when it was over. It would be something to laugh at.

Graham began to lose his fear. The sporting in him came to his aid. He felt as if he were watching two wrestlers, two pugilists, two wild beasts tearing each other with bloody jaws and foam-flecked skins. He clutched the arm of his chair. He whispered to himself:

"The little 'un wins. He wins. No—He's getting it sore. No! Shake him again. Go on! Go on!"

He forgot all else. The café and Richards had vanished. He did not see Richards sitting with the face of one who opens a closed door and beholds his fate grisly with welcome.

"God!" he said to himself. "They're putting up a real fight."

Still the struggle continued. The bigger beetle—or were they of one size—he could not tell now, was winning.

"Give it him now. A good bite for old Richards. Another! That's the style. Another! Tumble him on his back."

He was sure the red-marked one was winning. Old Richards would be thinking he was losing.

"That's it! That's it!" he heard himself cry out joyfully. "Your beetle wins. By God, Richards, he's won—knocked the other one clear off the wall!"

He turned with the words on his lips, his blinking eyes ablaze with excitement.

But the man beside him gave no reply. He was crouched up in his seat conquered by the foe he dreaded—Death.

# Strasbourg Rose

By  
John R.  
Coryell



## SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Doctor Merrill, a brilliant American physician, is held in Germany at the outbreak of hostilities, but finally secures permission to return to America through Belgium. He is well liked by the Germans, but secretly hates them for ravishing little nations. In Brussels he meets a mysterious and beautiful girl being pursued by the German secret service; she is a spy. He saves her at great risk to his own safety by calling her his wife. He is summoned away to operate upon the Kaiser, and he takes her with him to protect her. After the operation they learn that the authorities are still looking for her, and in order to escape he drugs a German general and his chauffeur. Disguising her as the chauffeur and himself as the general, they take the automobile and start their perilous journey. Hairbreadth escapes follow. They leave the machine by the roadway, go across fields under fire, swim the Yser Canal, and finally reach the French lines. After numerous delays they are taken before the Belgian king. He questions them and takes them to Joffre. A bomb is mysteriously exploded, nearly killing the great French general. Merrill hears that the girl, Rose d'Almeyrac, is accused of being a famous German spy, *Strasbourg Rose*, and she disappears. Merrill is taken to Paris, there interrogated, and finally set free. He still believes in her innocence. He meets her in a restaurant mysteriously, but she will not speak to him. He is sent to England. On the way the ship is torpedoed. He takes the clothing of an American who is killed, and decides to return to France to find Rose and prove her innocence.

## CHAPTER XI.

MERRILL found it amazingly easy to carry out his impersonation.

No trouble was made over his passport. He answered the description as well as Lowell had, and the photograph was as like him as it had been like Lowell. Nor was any objection made to his returning to Paris, his excuse of distaste for another attempt to cross the channel being accepted as quite natural.

By midday he was in Paris again

with all of Lowell's luggage and comfortably settled in a room in the Hotel Lutetia on the left bank of the Seine. He knew he had but little time before he must report his arrival and register, but as he had not yet had time to look over Lowell's effects, he locked his door and set about that task.

The greatest need he had was for money, and for the first time he dared to take out the wallet and examine it. It contained a greatly depleted book of bankers' checks, which naturally he

could not think of trying to use, since he had no wish to commit forgery, even if he had been able to do so. Besides there would be no need, since Lowell, in his fear of being caught in a place where he couldn't cash his checks, had turned most of them into money in the form of Bank of England notes to the amount of five hundred pounds, all of which reposed in their crisp newness in the wallet.

With a sigh of relief, followed by a murmur of wonder at the absurd conduct of the young American in carrying such a quantity of money in cash, Merrill proceeded to examine the contents of the luggage.

There were two suit cases and a trunk. They contained a quantity of clothing of various sorts, an odd assortment of jewelry and trifles picked up evidently in Italy and in Paris, and at the very bottom of the trunk another bundle of Bank of England notes, wrapped in brown paper like an ordinary package. There were five hundred pounds in the bundle.

Merrill shook his head. "Poor fellow!" he thought. "I suppose he found it difficult when he first came over to use his checks, and so at the first opportunity and when there was no longer any need of it, he cashed them. The only sensible thing he did was to have his money in Bank of England notes, which are good anywhere—perhaps even in Germany. Well, it serves me well. I'd have been in a bad way without this money. And maybe I'll be in a bad way when I come to settle with his heirs." He shrugged his shoulders recklessly. "I'll face that problem when I'm confronted with it."

In truth he was in such a mood that he cared little for the risk he was running of being caught in what would be considered a criminal act. The fact that he was very wealthy would not count for much if his deception was detected. What really concerned him

was what had happened to Rose d'Almeyrac. Had she made her escape from the restaurant? If she had, was she now in Paris? If she were not in Paris, where was she? And if she had been captured, had she been shot?

But through these questions the old ones went weaving about in his brain: What did it all mean? Why had he been sent away so peremptorily? How could Rose d'Almeyrac—the girl he knew and loved—have done that awful thing? If she had done it, how was it humanly possible for her to escape? How had she dared to come to Paris and show herself openly?

Often he wondered if the woman he saw in the restaurant could have been some one who looked like Rose; but he always dismissed the suggestion as impossible. She had recognized him and had been afraid. Why should she fear him? Didn't she know that he would give his life for her? Hadn't he proved his willingness?

And yet it was true as he considered it, as he had been considering it almost every moment since the meeting, that she looked older, more sophisticated. Moreover, she had been dressed richly and fashionably, and had conducted herself like one perfectly at home in Paris. On the other hand, how little these things meant to one who was so wonderful an actress. He groaned whenever he thought of it; she was a wonderful actress. Where did the acting begin and how much of what he had seen was acting, how much the expression of that beautiful nature he had come to love?

Finally it all came back to the same thing: Whatever she was he must find out, and to find out it was necessary for him to see her again and talk with her. He knew he would love her whatever she proved to be, but he also knew that if she was not what he wished her to be and what in his heart of hearts he believed her to be, he would

have the strength to give her up and go his way.

He did all the things required by the military and civil regulations, and, being securely established in Paris, set about finding Rose. He knew he could not hope to come upon her as he had done the night before; that sort of thing doesn't happen twice, and yet he knew no way excepting to search restaurants and to walk the streets.

He would have been a figure to attract attention if all Paris had not been so preoccupied in those sad days. He had not shaved after reaching Paris, permitting his beard to grow as a protection against recognition, so that for a while he had that unkempt look that a man always has under such circumstances.

He made a nightly round of the cafés on the Grand Boulevard, sitting for a while in one and then in another, watching the passers-by and studying the inmates. He walked the main streets and the by-streets, from Montparnasse to the Montmartre, from the Bois de Boulogne to the Place de la Republique.

The streets were dim, but he was sure that if he saw Rose d'Almeyrac in the most obscure corner he would recognize her. And finally he did see her. He was wandering with savage hopelessness through the Avenue Hoche, going from the Arc de Triomphe to the Parc de Monceau, when he saw an automobile draw up to the curb in front of one of the great houses. It was so rarely that one saw an automobile in use by a private person that Merrill loitered idly as he approached. A lady got out, having opened the door for herself. Merrill's heart almost stopped beating. It was Rose d'Almeyrac.

"I shan't want you any more to-night," she said to the chauffeur, and crossed the pavement rapidly and entered the court through the little door

which had been opened at the approach of the car.

Merrill's immediate sensation was one of profound relief; Rose d'Almeyrac was alive then and at liberty. His first conscious reflection was the amazing thought that she went about not only as if she had no fear, but as if she were a favored person. Why should she be in possession of an automobile when most persons had been obliged to give up their cars to the government?

He walked home to his hotel, trying to fathom the mystery that surrounded the girl. He remembered hearing it whispered in the cafés that there was a strangely powerful system of German espionage established in the very heart of Paris that defied the utmost efforts of the authorities to root out. Was it possible that Rose was really affiliated with that body? Was there such a body? He had always smiled scornfully at the thought of it, for so far as his own experience went it was not possible to exist in Paris for one hour without coming under the observation of the constituted authorities.

However, he had found her, and it was his settled determination to discover what the mystery was that enveloped her. He was sure, from the way she had entered the house and dismissed her chauffeur, that she lived there.

Now he would contrive somehow to watch her until he had learned something. What he was to learn or what he would do afterward he was going to leave to chance, to the suggestion of the moment. He felt as a fly might feel at finding itself unexpectedly tangled in a web. He couldn't even be sure that the spider wasn't quietly waiting for the appropriate moment to pounce on him.

The thing that held him to his purpose from first to last was that he had been going about his own proper busi-

ness when he was suddenly deflected and caught up in a whirl of events for which he was in no way responsible. Now, with jaws set, he was going to see the matter through to the end. He felt that no person nor any set of persons, no matter how high-placed, had any right to make a shuttlecock of him.

Besides, he loved this girl, be she whom she might. He had thrilled at the sight of her, and at the sound of her voice when she spoke to the chauffeur he had caught his breath and almost cried out to her.

The next morning he went to the Avenue Hoche, and, without going too near the house she had entered, he loitered about in a way to avoid as much as possible any attention, and fortunately for his purpose the avenue is one of those very wide, quiet, residential streets where one is unnoticed.

One other man loitered on the other side of the street, engaged apparently in reading his morning paper and paying no attention to anybody. A few children with their nurses came out of one house and went playing toward the park.

A few minutes before eleven the door of the house opened, and it did not surprise Merrill to see Rose come out. It seemed to him that he had expected her at just about that time. Two nurses with two sets of children had come out before and gone toward the park, and Merrill had not been expectant. Now he had his handkerchief to his face, lest, in spite of his newly grown whiskers, she should recognize him, and he was sauntering along quite naturally toward her.

She had glanced carelessly up and down the street, and then had gone in the direction of the park. The other man he had noticed was on the same side of the street as Rose, but he had shrank back close to the buildings as she came out, and, keeping close to them, had started after her.

This complicated matters for Merrill, who saw at once that the man was trailing her. However, he followed along some distance behind the man, studying him so that he would know him again. He felt that this was in the nature of a menace to Rose.

The man following her took a path to the left, and Merrill took one to the right, quickening his steps so that he might not lose sight of Rose, whom he was able to keep in sight either above or through the shrubbery. Rose went leisurely on as if bent only on a pleasure stroll until she came near to the old oval pond, where she sat down on a chair, which she would pay a sou for presently, and took some knitting out of a bag which hung over her arm.

She acted so like a regular habituée of the park that Merrill was puzzled and wondered if he had made a mistake, though that seemed impossible, for if he had not seen her face clearly from where he had stood on her coming out of the house, he had been sure of her from the very curves of her lithe figure and from a certain easy, graceful sensuousness characteristic of her.

He moved carefully until he was near enough to catch a glimpse of her face when once or twice she looked up to smile at some of the children playing near.

Guilty of a hideous crime when she could smile with such heavenly sweetness and when, as he could see, the children stopped for a moment to smile back at her? Impossible. He sighed happily. He looked about for the man who was following her, and after a few moments located him behind a forsythia, his face—an evil one, it seemed to Merrill—intent, his eyes watching eagerly.

After a while a sprucely dressed gentleman of fifty perhaps, with gray hair and mustache, came sauntering along

from the direction of the Batignolles, a newspaper in his hand. He avoided the romping children with a good-natured smile, paid no attention to Rose, and selected a chair next to her.

There was not a yard between the two chairs, but the newcomer did not even look toward the busily knitting girl. He opened his paper, and at once became absorbed in it. After a while he dropped the paper into his lap, took a bundle of papers out of the inner pocket of his coat, and with a pencil made some notes.

While he was doing this, Merrill noted that he had the decoration of the Legion of Honor on the lapel of his coat, and, idly speculating, decided that he was in the employ of the government in one of the numerous bureaux.

When he took up his paper again, he placed the papers on his lap, as if to have them in readiness for more notes. In a little while the papers slowly slipped off his lap unnoticed by him in his absorption in what he was reading.

Rose evidently took note of the fallen papers, however, for she bent over to pick them up. Her bag fell off her lap and covered the papers. She and the gentleman, who had become aware of what had happened, looked at each other and smiled. She fumbled with her bag, extricated the papers, and handed them to him. He raised his hat politely, thanked her, and at once resumed the reading of his paper.

Rose replaced her bag on her lap and went on with her knitting. A few minutes later the gentleman got up and went off in the direction of the Boulevard Malesherbes. Not long afterward Rose replaced her knitting in her bag, and, paying her sou to the old woman in charge, started leisurely back home.

If Merrill had not been watching very carefully, all this would have seemed quite unrelated and harmless,

but the fact was that he had seen that one paper out of those that had fallen had gone to her lap and later very deftly into her bag with her knitting.

Then she was engaged in some sort of intrigue, and all her appearance of innocence and guilelessness had been pure acting. Beads of perspiration broke out all over him, and a sudden despair settled down on him. Moreover, although the man spying on Rose had stood behind her, he had seen enough of what had taken place to enable him to guess the rest. Merrill was sure of this, because he had seen the man's eyes snap with ferocious joy.

But the other man? Merrill suddenly realized that if he would penetrate the cloud of mystery he must gather up every thread and follow each one to its conclusion. He knew where to find Rose; he must know more of the man.

Stunned by the evidence of Rose's surreptitious activities, Merrill had lost track of time; the man might have been gone a long or a short time. He would make the effort to find him, anyhow. He dared not risk attracting attention by running, but he walked briskly through the short Avenue Velasquez to the Boulevard Malesherbes, and looked up and down it. There were few persons on it, so that it was possible for him to see a long distance, and he was sure that he saw his man near the junction of Boulevard Haussmann strolling along jauntily.

He quickened his pace, and was near enough to identify his man before the latter turned into Rue Roquepine. He followed him, saw him turn into Rue Cambaceres, and there enter a large building. He passed and read the inscription on the building. It was the Ministry of the Interior. Merrill wanted to shut his eyes to the hideous possibilities of this discovery. If Rose had secret relations with some one in official position, then it seemed as if

she must be a German spy and a member of that organization that continued to successfully defy the power of the French secret-intelligence department. And it was done by corrupting Frenchmen in official position.

## CHAPTER XII.

HE walked slowly back toward the Parc de Monceau. Why concern himself any more about Rose d'Almeyrac? Had he not set all doubts at rest? Had he not seen enough to know that she was engaged in some nefarious enterprise?

No, he had not seen enough. What he had seen only added to the mystery. It is true that she, who had been branded officially as a most dangerous German spy, was walking about Paris with perfect freedom and was engaged in some doubtful enterprise with a French official; but, after all, that only added to the mystery. He would remain and learn more yet. She might be the most wicked creature in the world, but his heart furiously refused to accept the verdict of his reason.

"I will speak to her," he muttered savagely, "and her own lips must confess her falseness. And even then," he told himself sullenly, "I shall not believe. The girl who was with me in Belgium is not wicked. She is not false. I will wait."

His mind finally made up as to that, as his heart consistently was, he walked through the park and made his way into Avenue Hoche by way of the tiny Avenue Van Dyck. He looked at his watch. It was twelve o'clock, an hour when Rose was almost certain to be in her apartment. At any rate, he meant to take that risk, for he knew definitely now what he would do. He had noticed the yellow bill in front of the house announcing that there was a furnished apartment to be let. Many of the best houses at that time had

that sign out because of the numbers of families that had left Paris for the south, driven away before the Battle of the Marne, when it seemed as if the Germans would surely capture Paris.

He rang the bell and entered by the little door, which was open. The concierge came forward. She was a sad-faced little woman, who looked as if the war had taken toll of all she held dear. She looked inquiringly at Merrill.

"What kind of an apartment is for rent?" he asked.

"Of five rooms, monsieur; on the first floor. Will monsieur wish to look at it? It is a very pleasant apartment and well furnished."

The little woman seemed glad to talk to him, telling him of two sons killed at the beginning of the war and of another who was at the front. He gave her sympathy, and won her heart by execrating the Germans. Then he asked seemingly idle questions.

"The house is full excepting for this apartment?"

"Many of the families have gone south, monsieur, but they retain their apartments. This belongs to a young gentleman who is in the service and whose wife is nursing in one of the hospitals. They are not too rich and they wish to rent if possible. Monsieur is married?"

"No, I am an American newspaper correspondent, and I wish a place—a quiet place where I can write. Are there any children on this floor?"

"No, monsieur. You will find it very quiet here. There are children on the floors above, *tres jolies enfants*, who will not disturb monsieur in the least."

"The other apartments on this floor are not occupied then?"

"But, yes, monsieur. The one just across the hall is occupied by Madame Lepaire. No children."

"Oh! An old lady."

The concierge smiled. "*Mais non, monsieur*; very far from that. She is young and"—she lifted her hands and widened her eyes—"tres charmante. If monsieur takes the apartment he will perhaps see her some time, and he will agree that she is lovely. And so sweet and good and gentle! Her husband is in the aviation. Ah, poor girl! If she had not such good friends who come to console her she would be very lonely. She keeps a smiling face, but I have seen tears."

"She has been here a long time, then, since you know her so well?"

"But, no, monsieur; a month, perhaps."

"Perhaps I saw her as I came down the street—blue eyes and golden hair; a sort of English beauty."

"No, monsieur; she has gray eyes and brown hair. Ah, such eyes! The red lips can laugh and dimple, monsieur, but the eyes they tell me of the sorrow she hides. Such a cruel war to separate those who love each other. Monsieur, those Boches are not human to have done this."

"They will be punished in good time, madame. Yes, I will take the apartment. Perhaps you know some one who will make my coffee in the morning and who will clean up for me?"

"All that can be arranged, monsieur."

He found that he could give up the apartment at a month's notice, so he paid a month's rent and said he would take possession during the afternoon, begging her to have it aired and dusted for him.

It seemed that fortune, which had been unkind for a month, was in the way of making amends. He got his bags and trunk and himself into the apartment that afternoon without encountering Rose. Also he was satisfied that it was she who occupied the apartment across the wide hall. Also he found on examination that through the keyhole in his door he could see very

well any one who went in or out of her apartment, the hall being fairly well lighted by a huge skylight at the top of the staircase well.

He despised himself for his resort to the keyhole, but shrugged his shoulders. After all, it was no worse than stealing the name, passport, and money of a dead American.

He settled himself in the room nearest the door, and soon found that he could hear the movements of persons going up and down the stairs or through the hall. Then he gave himself up with self-scorn to his task of spying upon the girl he loved.

For two weeks he watched through the keyhole, listened through a tiny crack in his slightly opened door, and followed her when she went out. When she went out in her automobile, which she frequently did in the evening, he was unable to follow her, but at least he had made sure that it was she who lived in the opposite apartment. When she walked out in the daytime he trailed her, learning to do so with great expertness. When she received visitors, as she often did in the evening, he listened for some revealing word when they went in or out.

What she did or where she went in the evening he could neither find out nor guess. In the daytime when she walked it was usually to go to the park and knit. At such times she would sit in the same place as where he had first seen her, but at no time did anything happen, excepting that she was always shadowed by the same man he had seen the first time. He was sure, however, that she was there for a purpose, for she would sit and knit and smile at the children for a certain length of time—about half an hour—and then go back home.

At other times she would walk the length of the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne as if for exercise, and then back to her apartment. And there also she



was always followed at a considerable distance by her shadow, who always turned in time to avoid her observation and waited at one side of the Arc de Triomphe until she had passed into Avenue Hoche.

Her visitors were of all sorts, and usually several in number. At times there were officers, evidently on furlough; and he discovered that when these came there were always parties of laughing, talking ladies, who were admitted as if habitués. At other times there would be sedate men of middle age, but never did these men come when the officers were there.

The civilians never came when the officers were there, but generally there were two or three ladies. The officers would be the same for two or three nights; then there would come a new lot. The civilians, he learned, were usually the same; at any rate, some of them were always the same. And once Merrill heard one of these latter on coming out of the apartment say *ach!* in a distinctly German way, only to be swiftly checked by a sibilant "sh-h!"

Merrill was sickened at what seemed plain enough evidence of a system of German espionage hidden under the guise of social gatherings. His sympathies by this time were hotly with the Allies in spite of his arbitrary treatment by the French authorities. But the terrible thing was that if Rose was a part of this conspiracy, then she was a German spy; and if she were a German spy, all that had been said against her might be true; also, and worst of all to him, she had only tricked him in Belgium.

He writhed under the force of the logic, but still refused to accept the conclusion. When he was tempted to he recalled the hours when it seemed as if she had bared her pure soul to his eyes. Sometimes he thought he would go to her apartment and demand an explanation. He believed he was

entitled to that in view of what he had done in risking his life for her. He didn't do it, however, but continued to spy on her, hoping for something to happen to clear her, fearing more and more that the worst would be confirmed.

Then one night when she had gone away early in her automobile, leaving him unable to follow her, he walked dejectedly toward the Grand Boulevard, sick at heart, tempted as he often was to tempt fate no longer, but to leave Paris and go home. He ate his dinner in one of the cafés, and afterward wandered idly and sadly about. Passing the neighborhood of the Folies Bergere, he impulsively bought a ticket and went in. He had not been to a place of amusement since he had come to Paris, had not been in a mood for anything of the sort; nor was he now, but he was miserable and discontented and loathed the thought of going back to his apartment.

He sat the trifling show through, wondering how any one could laugh at the foolish antics of the men and women on the stage, and when it was over he walked home, indifferent to the distance. As he turned into Avenue Hoche from the Rue du Faubourg-St. Honore an automobile passed him. He recognized it at once as that of Rose d'Almeyrac, and followed it with his eye until, in the dark street, he could see it stop before the house.

He could see a woman's figure get out of the car, and saw the car drive away. Then, as the lonely figure crossed the sidewalk, a man sprang out of the darkness and a cry broke from Rose's lips. It was her voice, and the tone was one of fear. There was a swift struggle, Rose was thrown aside, and the man broke into a run.

Merrill had already started to run to the rescue, but as he saw the man coming toward him he slowed down into a saunter and waited until the

man was almost upon him. Then, with a sudden whirl of his body, he launched a swift blow that caught the man under the chin and fairly lifted him off his feet and laid him senseless on the sidewalk.

An automobile was approaching behind him, but he was reckless. He leaned over the man, saw an envelope clutched in his hand, and took it from him. Then, with a glance back at the approaching automobile, he darted down the street. He looked back when he reached the house and saw that the automobile had stopped and that some one had alighted and was bending over the prostrate man. The little door opened as he looked back and he went in, hoping he had not been seen.

When he reached his room and had turned on the lights he examined the envelope. It was of very light, tough material, and contained paper of a very flimsy character. He turned it over and over, but did not open it. For a hardly defined reason he disliked to know what the contents were. Finally he threw it on a table with a sense of disgust, and went to bed.

In the morning he looked at the envelope a number of times as it lay on the table, conscious of an ominous significance in it. When he had finished his coffee he walked up and down, considering, hesitating; then at last snatched it up and tore it open.

Inside was a large sheet of very thin paper, folded many times. He unfolded it and spread it out, his heart sinking as he did so, for at the first glance he saw that it was an elaborate drawing of fortifications. And when he examined it closely he uttered a shocked cry and fiercely crushed the sheet in his hand. It was a plan of the fortifications of Verdun.

"My God!" he groaned. "Then it is true."

He threw the sheet of paper down, and began to pace the room in an in-

describable distress of mind. Presently, feeling that he would choke if he remained there, he put on his hat and overcoat to go out. He dared not leave the paper behind him, so he folded it up, replaced it in the envelope, thrust it into an inner pocket, and went out of the house to walk himself into a calmness he was unable to attain indoors.

He went to the Bois de Boulogne, and walked for hours in the lonely paths. It was not calmness that finally came to him, but a cold, hard determination to end the affair once and for all.

It was his habit to enter and leave his apartment with the least possible sound in order to avoid attracting any attention from the apartment opposite, and it was in this silent way that he unlocked his door and went in now. Instantly, on closing the door, he had a sense of a presence in the apartment. His first thought as he stood still was that the woman who cleaned his apartment was there, but a swift glance showed him that she had been there, probably at her usual hour.

He listened intently, and became aware of sounds coming from one of the inner rooms. He crept cautiously forward to where he could see through a doorway, and caught a glimpse of a man's figure bending over, hunting through a drawer of the bureau in the bedroom.

He drew back to consider what this might mean. Was his identity known? Hardly that, for this was not the way the authorities would go about their work. They had only to knock at his door and say "come." That would have been final. No, it must be that he had been seen entering the house last night after taking the paper from the man.

This man, in all probability, was making a surreptitious visit to recover the lost paper. Perhaps he would be an

agent of the French secret service, perhaps not. In any case, he would surely be armed, and if he had no authority to be there he would not hesitate to use his weapon.

Merrill was in just such a grim, merciless mood as made him wish to capture his uninvited visitor and to wring something from him. He smiled sardonically and placed himself by the side of the doorway. Sooner or later the man must come by him.

He removed his hat and overcoat quietly, and set himself to wait with a grim patience. He had not long to wait, for the man worked expeditiously, opening one drawer after another and then going to every place likely to be used as a receptacle for a valuable paper. Then, with a smothered oath, he came into the next room, which Merrill used very seldom and which showed plainly its lack of usage. He made a swift examination of that room and entered the next one, the one adjoining that in which Merrill waited. This room he had already searched, as it was one used by Merrill to read and smoke in, but he went through it again. Then he cursed and came softly through the doorway. And there he was caught by the throat in a viselike grip and looked into the cold blue eyes of a man ready to make him suffer for the weeks of misery he had gone through and for the more recent hours of bitter anguish.

"If you struggle or try to get a weapon, I'll kill you," Merrill said in icy tones, and by a sort of instinct he spoke in German. "Let us go back to this room and talk."

He backed the man into the room, and the latter, realizing that he was in the hands of one whose strength was far beyond the ordinary, yielded sullenly. Merrill, still holding him by the throat with one hand, felt over him and took from his side pocket a revolver of the German type. Then he

pushed him into a low chair, and, still keeping his eyes on him, backed away and sat down in another chair. The revolver he held in readiness for use.

"Now," he said, "you will tell me what you were doing here."

Up to this time the man had not spoken a word. His pale-blue eyes flitted shiftily about the room, only to return to look into the hard, implacable eyes of his captor.

"I came in here by mistake," he answered slowly in French.

"You will please speak in German; both of us understand it better than we do French; at least we speak it better. Yes, I think it was undoubtedly a mistake. What were you looking for?"

The man stared at him without answering. "What were you looking for?" Merrill snapped. "I saw you searching for something. What was it?"

The fellow had a cunning, evil face, though he was well dressed and had the superficial aspect of a gentleman. A sneer slowly curled his thin lips. "I must have been trying to steal something," he said at last, speaking in German. "Why don't you call the police?"

"You mean," exclaimed Merrill, understanding at once, "that I don't want the police here any more than you do?"

"Do you?" was the response, and Merrill could see that he was recovering his confidence.

"No, I don't want to call the police, and don't mean to. You will talk without that."

"Will I?"

"I think so," Merrill said coldly. "Get up!" And when the man moved leisurely, caught him by the collar and jerked him to his feet. "You are making a mistake, my man." He turned him about and pushed him into the bedroom. "Lie on your face!" And as the man made no movement to obey, he jerked at his collar and knocked his

feet from under him. "If you move hand or foot you'll regret it," he said as he pushed the man flat to the floor.

Merrill spoke without heat, but with a sort of brutal hardness that carried conviction; so that while Merrill produced some handkerchiefs from a drawer the man lay motionless. In a few minutes he had him tied securely hand and foot. Then he gagged him.

He looked him over to make sure that there was little chance of his working loose, then picked him up and put him in a large closet and locked the door.

"Now," he said to himself, his face pale and set, "I'll make a call on my neighbor."

### CHAPTER XIII.

HE mechanically looked to see that his clothing bore no marks of the encounter, and then went out into the hall, softly closing and locking the door after him. He wished to keep his prisoner in ignorance of his departure.

He crossed the hall and touched the electric button. His heart almost stopped beating as he waited. Whatever came of the interview it was a momentous one to him. A young, intelligent-looking maid opened the door and stared at him silently.

"I wish to see madame," he said.

"Madame is not at home, monsieur," the girl said after a moment of hesitation. He could see her eyes curiously note the fact that he wore no hat or overcoat, and he had noted her hesitation.

"Yes," he said sharply, "madame is at home, and she will see me." He pushed past her and entered the apartment.

"But, monsieur!" the girl protested in a half-indignant, half-frightened tone.

"Who is it, Renee?" a voice demanded from an inner room.

"Some one I do not know. He insists——"

Merrill stood silent. It was the voice he knew and loved, and, although his errand there was not a friendly one, a tremor shook him. He heard the rustle of skirts, and stood erect and cold.

Rose stood in the doorway opening into the reception hall. "What is it you wish, monsieur?"

"I wish to see you on imperative business, madame," he answered, taking a step nearer to her.

She uttered a gasp, put her hand to her heart, and stepped back, staring at him. "You?" she breathed. "You? They told me you were dead."

"They thought so, madame. May I see you for a few minutes? I shall not detain you long."

After her first surprise she had started forward as if to give him glad greeting, but he was so cold and rigid that she drew back, saying in a low tone: "But, yes, monsieur."

She led the way into a little parlor charmingly furnished, and closed the door so that they were alone; then she turned swiftly on him, her gray eyes full of passionate pleading, her slender fingers locked together. "Oh, monsieur! You are angry with me; you are grieved and wounded because I did not recognize you that night: Oh, it was terrible for me, but I could not help it. You must believe me. If you could know what I have suffered for it! And when I was told you were dead, and I thought that in part at least I was to blame, I wished I, too, might die. You don't believe me."

Her distress looked so real, the very accents of truth were in her voice, her tear-filled eyes were so pitiful that Merrill felt his heart soften. Then he remembered how good an actress she was; he remembered the transfer of the paper in the park; he remembered the map of Verdun in his pocket.

"I would give my soul to believe you," he said hoarsely. "I refused steadfastly to believe one word against you. When they told me you had tried to assassinate General Joffre I laughed at them; when they said you were a German spy I knew it was not true. If every man in France from the highest to the lowest had said it it would not have shaken my faith in you. We had been but a few hours together, but I would have trusted my life and my honor to you."

"They would have been safe, monsieur," she said humbly, quietly wiping from her cheeks the tears that ran down them.

"You are Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac?" he asked.

"Yes, monsieur; just as I told you."

"You are known as Rose of Strasbourg?"

"Yes, monsieur; sometimes."

"You are a German spy?"

She opened her lips to speak, starting toward him; then turned and flung herself on a little couch and broke into violent sobs. He looked at her for a few moments, his broad chest heaving, the hard, bitter expression melting out of his face. Then he went over to her and knelt beside her.

"Well," he said, laying his hand lightly on her shoulder, "what does it matter? Why should I judge you? Each one plays his part in the world for one reason or another. I played my poor part because I learned to love you in those wonderful hours we were together in Belgium. Wonderful for me, at least. Everything said against you to me was a calumny. Every one knows that everything is fair in war. So it was fair to make a mock of me, and I have no right to ask for consideration when you are working for your country. Only"—he laughed in a way of self-scorn—"I wish you hadn't acted so well with me. Now I will say

good-by and take myself out of your life."

She turned and leaped to her feet, stretching out her hands toward him, the tears streaming down her cheeks, her sobs catching her as they would a child. "Oh, no, no!" she cried. "I can't let you go like this. I was not acting in Belgium; I was not."

It was heartbreaking to see her like this. Merrill sighed and shook his head sadly; he spoke gently, without anger. "There is nothing I wish so much to believe, but how can I? If you were a German spy, then you were acting. Will you assure me that you are not a German spy?"

"Oh, please, please trust me!" she wailed.

"It is not altogether a question of trust, mademoiselle. I am not saying whether you should or should not be a German spy. It is not my business to judge you. If you had come to me in France and asked me to help you I would have done it as I helped you in Belgium. It is true that my sympathies are all with France, but this with me is a personal matter. If, as a French spy, you had tried to assassinate a German, my feeling of horror would be the same. But even that is not what concerns me most. We were thrown together in such circumstances that the ordinary barriers to acquaintance were beaten down and I loved you. It would not be your fault that I loved you if it were not for many little things you did that made me love you and which you need not have done merely because I was risking my life to aid you, as I thought. If you were what you then pretended to me I would have the right to believe that you were not acting, but were what you seemed; if you were a German spy then, however, you were only deceiving me, working upon my heart and upon my feelings to gain your ends. You had the right to do this, no doubt, but my suffering

has not been lessened because of that. Now that I have satisfied myself that I was only your plaything, I can leave you and try to forget that you ever existed. I shall do nothing to expose you here, but will leave you to your own devices."

Once more he turned to go, his heart wracked by the sight of her distress, though he could not tell whether it was real or feigned; but before he could reach the door she had flung herself in front of him, crying passionately: "No, no, you shall not go until you have heard me. I must accept your judgment of me, whatever it may be, but some things I can say, and you must try to understand. I may be a clever spy; I may in some things be as infamous as you believe; I may be a good actress, but I swear to you by all I hold most sacred that I was not acting or pretending in Belgium so far as you were concerned. You say you loved me." Her voice softened and her full under lip trembled, and from her tear-filled eyes came a pleading look that shook him. "Well, I admit that I wanted you to love me." She wiped her eyes and looked down. "You were the noblest, the bravest, and the best man I had ever met. I—I thought you loved me, and as I say I wanted you to love me. I was proud and happy to think you did. But I did not try to make you love me; I did no acting. If I did anything to increase your love it was involuntary, it was because—because I loved you. Oh, won't you believe that?" she pleaded.

"Oh, my God!" he groaned. "I want to believe it, but how can I? And how will it serve you," he demanded with a sudden roughness born of his pain, "to have me believe it? I am not going to interfere with you here. I am going to leave Paris at once."

She went nearer to him and put her hand softly on his arm. "I am not afraid of what you will do," she said,

trying to smile. "All I ask is that you will trust me in the face of everything."

"Are you a German spy?" he demanded curtly.

"Can you not love me if I am?" she asked softly.

"I suppose I cannot help loving you whatever you are," he answered savagely; "but if you are, and I believe you are, then I hope never to see you again."

"And if I swear to you that I am not?"

He pushed her hand off his arm. "In that case I must tell you that I know of your relations with the traitor in the Ministry of the Interior."

"And if I still say I am not a German spy?" she asked, after a little start that he could not fail to notice.

"Then, mademoiselle, I must tell you that I have the map of Verdun which was snatched from you last night."

At that she started back with a cry of dismay. "You? You have it? It was you who took it from me?"

"No, I took it from the man who took it from you."

"And you have it?"

"I have it in my pocket." He placed his hand over it.

He was watching her keenly, and saw the expression of dismay give way gradually to the bewitching smile of glee that he knew so well and had loved so well. Indignation surged up fiercely in his breast at this evidence of her ability to play any part she chose. He put out his hand to push her aside.

"No," she said, smiling up at him, "you are not going. You shall sit down and listen to me, monsieur. Yes," and she put her two hands on his breast and tried to push him back. "Oh, but you are strong!" she laughed, when she found that she was powerless to move him. "Come, then; sit down because I beg of you."

"No," he said, "I am going, but I

am going with less pain now that you have shown me how easy it is for you to play a part. They told me you were a wonderful actress, mademoiselle," he added scornfully, "and I knew that, for I had seen you with General von Schilling. And just now it was with difficulty that I kept myself from believing you. Yes, I almost believed; I am not sure I did not believe that you were telling the truth when you said you loved me. Yes, you are wonderful, and I congratulate you, mademoiselle, on your remarkable gift."

She looked up at him with eyes that were still wet with tears, but she only laughed softly. "It is no wonder I love you," she murmured, the laughter dying on her lips. "You are so honest and true. Yes, I am a good actress, but I have not been acting with you, now or ever. And you will sit down and listen to me?"

"So that you can get the map from me?" he demanded roughly. "It is unnecessary. Take it! After all, why should I meddle in the affair? Here it is. Let me go." He held out the envelope to her.

She took it and thrust it into the bosom of her dress, but instead of moving aside she smiled again into his face. "But this is not all I want, please. You have something yet that I must have and will have no matter how hard you struggle."

"Well," he asked, unsmiling, "what is it?"

"I want your trust and confidence, and I mean to have them. Please, dear!" she pleaded softly. "You will be so sorry you were obstinate when you have listened to me. Please, dear!"

He trembled violently as the caressing word fell on his ear. He wanted to rush from the room reviling her, but deep in his heart was even yet the hope that she could explain. He knew he could no more refuse to listen to her than he could bring himself to strike

her. She saw him yield, and with a low laugh caught one of his hands and pulled him to the couch.

She forced him gently down and put her hand on his shoulder. "For the first thing," she said, "you must look into my eyes and seek the truth there. No, not with that cold, hard expression; you cannot see my soul with ice on your eyes, dear. Look as you looked a few times in Belgium. No? Can you not do it yet? There is no trust left? Not even your love can bring that back? You do love me?"

He had never listened to such notes of tenderness in his life. He shook as with the ague. He looked into her eyes despairingly. "Oh, Rose!" he groaned. "I would give my soul to believe you."

"You shall believe me," she said. "You will not doubt when I have told you what I have to tell. See! I will sit here opposite to you, and you can look into my eyes and be sure." She drew a chair to within a short distance of him and sat down. "I was distracted when they said I must not tell you. I told them that you were true and loyal; I even said I loved you, but the matter was so important that they would not let me even see you again. When they read the document I carried——"

"But you carried none," he sighed.

"Oh, yes, I did. It was on my shoulder and needed only a chemical to bring it out."

"That is the truth?" he cried.

"Look into my eyes."

He looked, and covered his face with his hands. In spite of himself he found himself believing, and with it the wonder came if she were only once more beguiling him with her witchery.

"There was something I could do that no one else could do as well, and for the sake of bleeding, stricken France I crushed back the cry of my heart and consented. There was no attempted assassination. That was a

device to establish me with the German spies in France. There is a nest of them here. Who they were and how they obtained their information was suspected, but not known. But the secret service had the means of introducing me into this nest. I won't go into details, but these spies are many of them born French men and women, receiving huge sums from Germany. They are doing everything, from corrupting our men and officers to making traitors of men in the various government departments. You know of the man in the ministry and you know of this map. You see how desperate the need was of some one to trap them. It seemed that I was the one best fitted for the service. Do you believe now?"

He had listened in breathless silence. Now he looked hungrily into her eyes, and the conviction that had been growing with her words of explanation resolved itself into certainty when he looked into the great gray eyes that were luminous with truth and sincerity.

He reached out hesitatingly and took her two little hands in his. "Can you forgive me?" he asked.

"There is no need for forgiveness."

"And you do love me?"

"With all my heart and soul."

He leaped up and caught her to his breast and strained her to him without a word. And she, with a sigh of content, laid her head on his breast, where she could feel the violent beating of his heart. For a long time he held her, trying to realize that he was at peace once more with the girl he loved. Then he lifted her face and put his lips to hers.

"You will never doubt me again, dear?" she whispered.

"Never."

"I thought you were dead," she murmured; "and after that I didn't seem to live, but was only playing a part. But you are alive, and I have told you what I should not have told. But for

that I do not care. I could not let you go away, and when I found you knew so much I made up my mind to tell you everything. Ah, if I could tell you how happy I am!"

#### CHAPTER XIV.

IT was easy enough for him to see how happy she was, for she talked gayly and freely with the beautiful abandon of a child. She answered all his questions, and he noted that she did not ask him to keep secret the things she told him. He spoke of it.

"But, dearest," she answered, "why should I ask you that? I trust you absolutely; I know that what I tell you is safe. I will have to explain to the chief—he who sent you away—and perhaps he will be angry, but I cannot help that. Now tell me about yourself, dear. How did you make them think you dead? Tell me!"

He told her that, and about his subsequent search for her and how he accidentally found her and then took the apartment opposite hers.

"It is you who live there?" she cried. "I have wondered many times, but it did not trouble me because it did not matter. I know I am followed everywhere by some one. These French traitors have their spies, the government has its spies, and the Germans have theirs. I knew well enough that I was watched that morning you followed me to the park, but you see it did not matter. What surprises me is that the government spies have not discovered you. Ah, I am glad you came to me, for now I will beg the chief to let you remain. But to think that you have been so near to me and I did not know it!"

Her surprise at this singular circumstance was so full of implications sweet to a lover that demonstration of some sort became necessary, and as she was sitting by his side the natural demon-



stration was as easy as it was delightful.

"Ah!" she sighed when at last he released her. "I am behaving like an American girl, and not at all as French girls do; but I like your American ways. Now go on with your story. How did you get the map of Verdun?"

He related the circumstances, and she interrupted once to say it was a piece of good fortune, since the map was an important item in the rooting out of the German spies. She was puzzled when he told of the man he had caught in his apartment and had left there.

"Describe him, please."

He did so with so much detail that she cried out: "He is one of the German spies. He lives in this house. But why did he go there without letting me know? That has a meaning."

"What shall I do with him? I could turn him over to the police."

"No," she said, frowning. "If you were to do that it might interfere with our plans. But why did he go there without first letting me know? Something is going on that I do not understand. But never mind! The chief will attend to that. I think you would better let him go. He is watched all the time."

"Perhaps I could make him talk, though I must admit I hadn't much success at that."

"No, you could get nothing out of him. But I am troubled. It seems as if something has gone wrong since I was not consulted. You see, this map of Verdun is really only a trap. We know that the Germans have their eyes on Verdun and mean some day to try to take it. They have spent large sums trying to get a map of the fortifications. This map is correct in many particulars—particulars that they already know—but in the parts they do not know it is false; so that if it is used it will mislead them. Do you see, dear?"

"Yes, I see. What a tangle of intrigue!"

"It is the chief's idea. He is amazingly clever. He is using their spies to fool them. Now I was to take this map through the lines to-night and deliver it to a man who was to meet me."

"Take it through the lines? You? But, my dear, isn't that terribly dangerous?"

She shrugged her shoulders sadly. "Yes, it is dangerous for many reasons: I may be shot by my own countrymen, I may be suspected any time by the Germans. It is dangerous work, but what would you? Some one must do it, and I who know German as well as French, I who have the confidence of the French traitors and of the German spies, I who know the country between here and Alsace-Lorraine as I know this apartment, am the one chosen by fate."

"But," he cried indignantly, "it is not a girl's work; it is work for a man. They have no right to employ you in this way."

"It is for France, dear. Because I am a girl there is little else that I could do, so I am glad to do this. They say I do it well, and of that I am proud. It is distasteful, yes; but is not everything connected with war horrible?"

He looked at her for a few moments. "You say you go to-night?"

"I start this afternoon. That is why, dear, I felt I must tell you the truth so that you would understand."

"Because you fear some extra hazard this time?"

"Because each time I go the risk increases. The Germans are clever and are not easily fooled. I have taken them much important information, and they believe in me. But always there is the chance that they will find out."

"How do you go?"

"By automobile." She smiled wanly. "The Germans supply the automobile and the papers to get me through the

lines. These papers are partly genuine and partly forged. Oh, the whole thing is such a network of intrigue and it is so well hidden that it is appalling. And poor France, as if she had not enemies enough outside, has many inside. There are even some high up whom we have not caught yet."

"You feel that you must make this venture?"

"But, yes, dear," she answered sweetly, but with a finality that left nothing to combat.

"Then I am going with you."

"You? Oh, my darling! But that cannot be."

"It shall be. Do you think I have found you to let you slip out of my life now? Suppose this should be your last adventure? Would you not rather the end came in my arms?"

"That would be the sweetest end that fate could deal out to me. But it cannot be, dear. It has all been planned in detail, and I must do as I have been told."

"You have seen me in danger; can you not trust me?"

"More than any one in the world. You are the bravest, the coolest, the cleverest man in the world, but it is not for me to say."

"Who decides?"

"The chief."

"Who drives you?"

"A German spy. I think he is French born, too."

"Listen to me, my darling. I have eaten my heart out in anguish and despair all these weeks. I believed you false and unworthy, and still loved you. Now I have not only found you and know that you love me, but I have learned that you are all that I ever believed you. Do you think I will let you go without me? No, no, no! You will give me a little note to your chief. I will go to him and tell him everything. I will enlist under you; I will put myself at his disposal. I speak French

and I speak German. He will let me go with you."

He spoke with passionate earnestness. She watched him with something like adoration in her eyes, and when he had ceased to speak she threw her arms about his neck. "If only it might be, dear," she murmured. "If only it might be! I am afraid this time, whether it is because you have come back to me and I dread losing you, or because the danger is real, I cannot tell, but I am afraid. If I had you with me I could smile all the way and laugh in the face of death. Yes, I will give you the note, and you shall tell him the whole truth. I don't need to tell you not to be afraid of him, as most men are, for you are afraid of no one. Don't I know that? Yes, yes, we will try it. You will leave that spy in your apartment, and let the chief decide what to do with him. You will go at once, dear, for now you will find him at the bureau where you saw him before. He is not always at the same place."

She wrote a note quickly. "You may read it if you like, dear, but I think it will be better if you don't know what I have written."

"You know best, dearest. Seal it."

She sealed it and handed it to him, and then threw herself into his arms, where he held her close, kissing her hair and her eyes and her lips before he could tear himself away.

"Find out, if you can, if you are followed," she warned him. "If you are, do your best to elude whoever it is."

Being warned, he had no difficulty in discovering that he was followed and as little difficulty in evading his shadow. Having accomplished this, he slipped down into the Metro, and in a very few minutes was in the Cité.

As he saw by examining the envelope, it was addressed to Colonel le Brun, a person quite unknown to him by name. Also he saw a peculiar mark

in one corner of the envelope, which he easily guessed to have some significance. He was confirmed in this conjecture when, having penetrated as far as the large anteroom, he gave the envelope to an attendant, for he saw him study the envelope, give a swift, second glance at him, and then hasten away.

A few minutes later the attendant returned and ushered him into the presence of the same grim officer whom he had seen there on the occasion of his previous visit.

"Have you read this note, monsieur?" was the curt demand.

"No, Monsieur le Colonel."

The officer was in civilian clothes, but Merrill knew he had made no mistake in giving him the title. The well-remembered steel-gray eyes seemed to bore into him, but he returned the look with composure. The colonel pushed the note toward him. "Read it!"

Merrill took it and read it through. It was brief. "The gentleman who will present this to you by chance became possessed of a part of that which I am doing. I have confided the rest to him. I know I had no right to do this, but perhaps when you have heard what he has to say you will forgive me. He is the very spirit of loyalty and courage, and I hope you will permit him to do what he wishes."

Merrill smiled faintly as he refolded the note and replaced it on the table. Her tribute to him made him happy.

"Have I seen you before?" the colonel demanded suddenly.

"Yes, Monsieur le Colonel, I have been here before. I am that Doctor Merrill you once sent out of France."

"Ah!" grunted the colonel and leaned back in his chair, silent for a moment, studying his visitor. "Yes, I recognize you now—your eyes. Do you know that you are a very bold man? Well, tell me what you have to tell."

Merrill, who had been standing all this time, looked around coolly. "Mon-

sieur le Colonel," he said, "I wish to propitiate you and to win your good will, but if I am permitted to sit down I shall feel less as if you wished to humiliate me."

The faintest of smiles flitted over the stern face. "Yes," he answered, "I recall you now perfectly. Please be seated. Your story. How come you to be in France?"

Merrill drew up a chair and plunged at once into his story. The colonel interrupted occasionally to ask a question, but for the most part listened in silence, always studying the speaker. When Merrill had finished the colonel was silent for a while, looking at his desk and lightly tapping it with his finger tips.

"Do you know, monsieur," he demanded suddenly, "that you took your life in your hand when you returned to Paris and meddled in this affair? France is in no mood to condone conduct which may injure her so vitally."

"As for that, Monsieur le Colonel," replied Merrill steadily, "you must remember that since Doctor Merrill was dead his life could not be in my hand. Moreover, it is only just that you should bear in mind that I knew nothing of these things that I know now; I knew only that the woman I loved had been monstrously defamed, and I took the chance that went with discovering the truth. Now I am here to beg you to make use of me in this enterprise. Mademoiselle will be in danger, and I beg of you to let me accompany her. It is true that I have pitted my poor wits against yours, but it was in no spirit of wantonness, but only because of an anguish of mind which you cannot understand unless you have loved a woman as I love Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac. Also I beg you to know that I love France and will loyally do my best in her service."

"I have the power and the right to have you shot as a spy, monsieur."

"You have not the right, because you know I am not a spy. You knew nothing of me until I came to reveal myself."

The colonel without answering pushed a button, and almost immediately a door at the back of the room opened to admit a small, insignificant-looking man.

"Laroque," said the colonel, "what do you know of this man?"

"He is Monsieur Richard Lowell, an American newspaper correspondent who does not correspond. He lives in Avenue Hoche in an apartment——" He stopped and looked inquiringly at the colonel.

"Go on! Everything!"

"He lives in an apartment opposite Mademoiselle d'Almeyrac, on whom he has been spying for some time. He was to have been arrested this evening in order to make sure that he would not interfere with our plans."

"This man, Laroque, is Doctor Merrill, the American who was sent out of France," the colonel said coldly.

Laroque stared at Merrill with manifest chagrin. "But Doctor Merrill was reported——"

"As you see, he is very much alive. Did you know that he had become possessed of that map of Verdun?"

"No, Monsieur le Colonel," gasped Laroque. "I knew it had been snatched from the hand of mademoiselle, but our information was——"

"Your information was not correct, Laroque. You must look to it. The map was snatched from mademoiselle by some one from the Interior. Doctor Merrill knocked him down and took it from him. This morning the German, Fritz Haase, was found by the doctor in his rooms, searching for the map. Something has gone wrong."

"Pardon me while I make inquiries," exclaimed the greatly perturbed Laroque, bowing and hastening from the room.

"You see," said the colonel when they were alone again, "your life was in danger. If you had been arrested I don't know what would have saved you; certainly not the revelation of yourself."

"I see that I am a child at this game, Monsieur le Colonel; but does it follow that I might not serve you well in some other way? I think no one would try harder than I if I might be permitted to accompany mademoiselle."

"I believe you, monsieur. Neither your loyalty nor your courage nor your ability are now in question. I ask myself in such a case who is the fittest. It may be that you are. If you are you shall go with mademoiselle. Don't thank me, monsieur; I am not serving you either as man or lover; I serve France and France alone. If it were better for France that you should die, then die you should, though the heart of mademoiselle, whom I admire and respect profoundly, were to break. I tell you this so that we may understand each other."

"You have made yourself clear, Monsieur le Colonel," Merrill answered coldly. "If I can serve myself and France at the same time you have the added guarantee of my devotion and loyalty."

"You are a brave man, Doctor Merrill, and as one man to another I beg to grasp hands with you."

Both grim faces lighted up as they clasped hands. "Thank you, Monsieur le Colonel," said Merrill. "Forgive me if I have put my personal affair too much in the foreground, and dispose of me as you will for the good of France. I make no reservations."

"Good! Good!" cried the colonel. "Now at last we understand each other. We are troubled by traitors as well as by spies. These traitors are powerful and have means of information that enable them to safeguard themselves. That explains what happened last night."

They had stolen the map from the war department—a false map, of course—and had given it to mademoiselle. Later, for some reason, they were frightened and stole the map back from her. Why did they steal it back and not ask her for it? Did they suspect her? Why did the German spy search your room without notifying her? Did they suspect her? These are things we don't know, but must find out."

Laroque entered the room while they were speaking, and stood waiting. At a sign from the colonel he said: "The traitors have received some information which disturbs them; the German spies also. They are very much disturbed. It looks as if mademoiselle is suspected."

"Yes, that is probable. Laroque, the traitors must not be touched, but you will see that the spies are gathered in. It is a pity since we were not ready. Lesbin was to drive mademoiselle, I believe."

"Yes, Monsieur le Colonel."

"How does he compare in appearance with Monsieur le Docteur? Will you please stand up, monsieur?"

Merrill stood up and Laroque studied him. "Very much the same excepting in the face. Lesbin wears no beard and he has light hair."

"Père François could arrange that, no doubt!"

"But, yes; he could do that easily. Monsieur le Docteur speaks German? Lesbin is a Saxon and speaks German like a peasant."

"My German is good," Merrill said, "and if I could hear this man speak I do not doubt I could imitate him sufficiently well."

"That can be arranged," said the colonel. "You will see that the spies are brought here quietly, Laroque. They are simply to disappear, you understand. There must be no warning to the others that we leave at liberty. It is important."

"Yes, Monsieur le Colonel."

"You will take Lesbin and Monsieur le Docteur to Père François and explain what is desired. You, monsieur, will have there the chance to hear Lesbin speak. See that he speaks in German, Laroque. Monsieur le Docteur is to drive mademoiselle. Can you drive a Mercedes, monsieur?"

"Perfectly well."

"Good! Now, Laroque, you must get into communication with mademoiselle and tell her that Monsieur le Docteur will drive her."

"Mademoiselle Renee is here, Monsieur le Colonel."

"I might have known mademoiselle would think of that. Send her in here. By the way! Fritz Haase is in monsieur's apartment; in a closet, I think you said, monsieur?"

"In a closet off the bedroom."

Laroque went out and Renee came in. Merrill, to his surprise, recognized her as the dull-looking maid of all work who took care of his apartment. She was totally unlike the alert, bright-eyed maid who had admitted him to Rose's apartment. He realized how thoroughly he had been under surveillance.

"You have met before," the colonel said with a slight smile. "This gentleman, Renee, is to drive mademoiselle to-night. Please tell her."

"Yes, Monsieur le Colonel," Renee answered, bowing and smiling at Merrill; then turned a serious face to the colonel. "It is very sure, Monsieur le Colonel, that mademoiselle is suspected. Perhaps it will not be safe for mademoiselle to go."

"Unfortunately she must go, Renee. We will see that no one goes through from here to warn the Boches, so that if they do not already know she will be as safe as usual."

"Yes, Monsieur le Colonel." She bowed and went out.

"Now, Monsieur le Docteur, I will explain the situation. Mademoiselle

d'Almeyrac is the only one who can do this, so I send her, although the danger is undoubtedly great. The Boches on the other side may also know that she has duped them. We must chance that. If it were only to get the false map of Verdun into their hands it would not be worth the risk, but she is to meet one of our own spies who has information of the greatest value to us. She knows the country perfectly and can guide you. You have a weapon?"

"Only this which I took from the spy."

"You are accustomed to weapons?"

"I am a good shot with a pistol and fair with a rifle, but I must tell you that I have never shot at a man."

"Yes, it is different, but you have iron nerves, and you will shoot well if you must. I will give you two good American automatics. You have heard enough to convince you that the risk is terrible, and yet I trust you, monsieur, since you are willing to undertake it. You will not be the less efficient because it is mademoiselle you are to guard. Ah!" he sighed, showing the first sign of weakness. "Is it not horrible that we are compelled to endanger such a beautiful spirit as mademoiselle? I can only say this to you, monsieur, that if she were my own daughter I would send her just the same. If you could realize France's danger you would understand."

"If I do not understand, Monsieur le Colonel, at least I am content since I shall be there to protect her."

The colonel silently thrust out his hand, and Merrill grasped it firmly. The two men at last understood and liked each other.

## CHAPTER XV.

AT five o'clock that afternoon Merrill, a very complete counterfeit of Lesbin, stopped his car in front of the house in Avenue Hoche. It was

already sufficiently dim, so that nothing but a very careful and close inspection of him would have betrayed to any one that he was not the dull boor he pretended to be.

Merrill had no illusions about the character of the present adventure. He knew that it would be almost by a miracle that he would ever return with his precious passenger, but it seemed to him that death with Rose would be joy in comparison with the misery of his recent weeks. Moreover he was grimly determined to protect Rose at any cost and to return with her if it were humanly possible.

He had had several hours in which to think the matter over, and he had ended in identifying himself with the French utterly. He was undertaking the adventure as a Frenchman, and there was something exalting in the thought of sharing this peril with the woman he loved.

Rose came out almost immediately upon his stopping in front of the house. She said nothing to him, but took her place in the tonneau as she might have done if the real Lesbin had been in the driver's seat. Out of the corner of his eye Merrill saw that she was enveloped in a long cloak that almost swept the ground.

Having been instructed as to the gate by which he should leave the city, Merrill without hesitation started the car, turned the first corner, and then struck into the Boulevard Haussmann. Nothing was said between them until after their papers had been examined at the Porte d'Allemagne and they were passing through Pantin. Then she leaned forward and put her ungloved hand on his cheek.

"*Mon ami!*" she murmured.

He caught her hand and pressed it to his lips. This was all until they had passed the last fortification and were speeding through the open country; then she leaned over and with her cheek

on his said: "If you will stop, dearest, I will get out and take my seat beside you for a while. It will be safe here, and I wish to talk with you."

In a few moments the change was made. "Now go slowly for a while so that we may talk."

"Ah," he said with a sigh of deep satisfaction, "this is better than when I was a general and you a *gefreite* in the German army."

"Yes," she answered, sighing, too; "but, alas, dearest, it is quite as dangerous, or will be later. You know all about it?"

"I know you are suspected and that we may have trouble."

"And you are reconciled, Hayden, dear?"

It was absurd of him, no doubt, but it was the first time she had ever spoken his name, and the sound of it from her lips thrilled him. "I am sorry for the risk you run, but I am reconciled in the sense that since France demands this of you I am permitted to share it with you; nevertheless I do not think it work for a woman."

"Ah, my dear," she answered, "in these days there is no distinction between Frenchmen and Frenchwomen. If you knew as I do the peril France stands in from enemies within and enemies without; if you knew the desperate struggle she is making for very existence, you would realize that every one who can help must help. You cannot tell from the surface of things how the war is going. France needs the help of all—man, woman, and child. I can help; so I do."

"I, too, have thrown in my lot with France, dear. What I can do I am prepared to do."

She leaned softly against him. "We have done a more difficult thing together," she said; "we will do this. I will tell you what we have to do. You know we have more than one hundred and fifty miles ahead of us?"

"Yes, they told me that."

"We go to an old château which belongs to a cousin of mine. He is a captain in the German army. His mother married a German. We were both Alsations, you see. When the war broke out we went our separate ways. I should tell you, dear—please do not be jealous—that Friedrich and I were going to be married. No, I did not love him; I loved no one until I saw you. It was a family arrangement, and I accepted it. It seems, however, that he did love me."

"That was inevitable."

"*La, la, mon ami!*" she laughed. "But it is sweet to have you say it. I say Friedrich and I went our separate ways; but Friedrich, who, like all Germans, is very clever in some ways is also very stupid in others. He could not understand how dear France was to me, and it was he who suggested to me that I should be a spy—a spy for Germany. He took it for granted that Germany must win, and also he never doubted that I would be his wife. Well, I saw my chance to help France, and I pretended to agree. That was how I came into this work. I was allowed to escape into France, and since then I have lived in Paris and have made three visits to Strasbourg. The last one was just before I met you. I was carrying that document on my shoulder, and discovered that I was suspected. That is why I made my way behind the lines into Belgium. The rest you know. The pretended attempt to assassinate Joffre was to rehabilitate me. It seemed very foolish to me, but at least it succeeded, and I was able to take up my work again in Paris."

"Oh, my dear!" he sighed. "And you only a girl!"

"Yes, but you see I have done a great deal, after all. I have not dared to venture back into Strasbourg, but I have been to the château twice and have carried back very important informa-

tion. You see, I take information—of no value—to the Germans who meet me there, but I am always met by a French spy—an Alsatian—who meets me before the Germans come. It has been very successful until now. Now it seems I am suspected again, but whether the suspicion was born in Paris or on the other side is what we do not know."

"But if on the other side, then you are putting your head in the lion's mouth."

"Yes; but we must try to beat them even then. We must be at the château two hours, if possible, ahead of the time set for me. Then our spy will have time to deliver his information and perhaps to let me know if I am suspected."

"You speak of this very calmly, dearest, but at the best it is a terrible risk."

"I speak calmly because I must be cool and calm. Besides the risk may not be as great as it seems. This château belongs to Friedrich von Sturm, my cousin. It was his mother's, and there as children we spent many happy days. It is very old and very large and has secret places that few but Friedrich and I know. It is behind the German lines, it is true, but the lines are thinly held, and to one who knows the roads as I do it is not difficult to get to it unseen."

"But the car will be heard."

"The car will be heard, but no one will notice because after we are once through the German lines—and there will be no trouble about that—no one will trouble us. You see, the château stands within the forest, the forest of Woevre, and is even now very lonely."

"My dear," he said when she had ceased to speak, "I feel very helpless, and I can do nothing but go on blindly as you tell me."

"The stake is great enough, dearest," she answered him, laying her head

against his shoulder. "The information I shall obtain is enough in itself, and if in addition I can deliver the map unsuspected, then the result will be incalculable. The Germans have their eyes on Verdun, and some day will attack it. If we can trick them into planning on false information, then we shall have them in a trap."

"Oh, my dear," he said, "it is a terrible thing to me to be taking you into this danger, but since I have lent myself to it rather than be parted from you again, we will hope that it will result happily, and we will do our best to that end. In the meantime let us forget that we are spies and remember only that we are lovers. Fate owes us a few hours of unadulterated happiness."

"It is my dearest wish, *mon ami*," she answered softly.

He stopped the car and turned to her, and she, divining his wishes, threw herself into his arms and yielded her lips to him.

The road they took was well back of the French lines, and was sufficiently good to permit them to rush along for the most part at a rate of nearly forty miles an hour. The roads seemed quite deserted, and the car, being in perfect condition, rolled on without seeming effort. They passed south of Chalons-sur-Marne, and at about nine o'clock turned northward just before reaching Bar-le-Duc. From this time on they were stopped now and again to show their papers, and Rose, knowing this would be the case, had resumed her seat in the tonneau.

The country grew rougher as they advanced now, and Rose whispered to Merrill that they were in the Argonne. Later Merrill was to know that country better, for it was there that the splendid American boys were to make history. At the time, however, he was occupied by the one dreadful thought that he was carrying the woman he loved farther and farther into an in-



describable peril. After they had passed through the French lines, which was accomplished with so little difficulty that Merrill knew that their mission must be guessed, Rose bade him go very slowly.

The roads now were rough and badly cut up, and frequently they heard shells go screaming over their heads in both directions. They were stopped three times before they reached the Meuse, and at the river were subjected to a severe scrutiny; but Rose had a set of papers for the Germans, and was permitted to pass finally. Having crossed the Meuse, they put on speed again, although the road was not only rough, but hilly, and they constantly passed through patches of thick woods.

At last they entered a forest so gloomy that but for their bright lights they could not have seen a yard in front of them. Even there, however, Rose showed her marvelous familiarity with the place, and directed him with perfect accuracy. Presently she leaned over and bade him stop. She had him turn the car so that it headed in the return direction, and then they alighted from it. The lights were turned out, and they stood in black darkness.

"From here, dearest, we walk," Rose said. "It is about a mile to walk, and the way is very rough. Here is an electric lamp for use in case of need."

He took the lamp mechanically and dropped it into his pocket. It seemed to him that the gloom and the silence were fairly threatening. He turned suddenly and caught her to him and held her without speaking, and she clung to him with passionate murmurs as if the dread of the unknown had wakened all her terrors. Then she put her arms about his neck and kissed him over and over. "Oh, my dearest," she said, "I should not have let you come."

"That had to be," he answered. "Now what comes to one comes to both. But this must be the end for you. I

will give myself to France to do and dare the utmost, but you must take no more risks like this. Will you promise me?"

"Yes, I promise. This shall be the last. The pitcher that goes too often to the well is broken at last. It would have to be anyhow, for after this I shall be of no use, since I shall be known for what I am."

"Thank Heaven for that!"

They were starting on when Rose stopped. "One moment, dear! In case anything should happen to me, remember that this spot lies exactly south from the château."

"Do you think I shall return if anything happens to you?" he demanded fiercely.

"We must think of France, dearest," she pleaded. "At least I must think of France, and you must think of the civilized world for whom France is fighting. Could we be happy if we sacrificed so many for ourselves? No, dear! Promise me that if you can get back and I cannot for any reason that you will go. Do you not see?"

It was hard for him, feeling as he did about the adventure, to make the promise, but he knew she was right, and, more than that, he knew that his promise would lighten her load. "Very well! I promise."

She put her hand in his, and they started. He could distinguish nothing—everything was equally black to him, even when his eyes were more accustomed to the darkness—but she went forward unhesitatingly as if guided by a sixth sense.

The distant boom of big guns and scream of shells seemed only to make the utter silence of the forest more dismal. He did not recall ever hearing of the place, but he knew it must be of great extent. He asked her about it.

"Oh," she answered, "it is a large forest—more than fifteen miles long and as wide in some places—and it is

so dense that even in the daytime it is almost impenetrable. An army could hide in it. There was much fighting here in the days of the French revolution, and in our last war with Germany much blood was spilled here. Back where we left our automobile there is a big stone set up by the roadside to mark where Kellermann beat the Prussians in '93, I think it was. When I was a little girl I always trembled if I was out in the forest at dusk because I thought it must be full of the ghosts of dead soldiers. Formerly it was alive with wolves, but the only wolves here now are the Germans. They are worse than the real wolves."

He felt her shudder, and knew that a sudden terror had overtaken her. He turned and drew her to him, and she rested on his breast until she was calm again.

"You see," she said, disengaging herself with a pitiful little laugh, "what a coward I am."

"I never knew a woman could be so brave," he said. "I learned to know you in Belgium."

"Ah!" she sighed, pressing his hand. "Whatever happens I have had your love. I think Heaven must have sent me to you in Brussels. I was so frightened that day. I was sure I could not escape. Then I saw you in that doorway. What a blessed moment! And how splendidly you carried me through that danger! I have thought of you so often; always cool and ready, and yet in moments of action there was something terrible in your calm courage. And how strong you are! I wondered, knowing you, what you would do when you were sent out of France. Can you guess what I thought, dearest?"

"How can I guess, beloved?"

"I did not know, but I hoped you loved me. There had been some glances between us, you know."

"Yes, I shall not forget them."

gATB

"I knew I loved you, but while I hoped you loved me I was afraid. Why should a wonderful man like you love me? And then what they had told you about me! But I kept telling my sad heart that maybe you did love me and that if you did somehow you would find me."

All this was the sweetest music he had ever listened to, and it was small wonder that when she ceased with a sigh of wonder and admiration he should take her into his arms.

"I am not what you think, my darling," he said, "but I love you with all my heart and soul, and I do believe that I should always find you, no matter where you were hidden from me, for that would be my sole object in living."

After they had walked for less than half an hour, Rose stopped him and whispered: "The château is there in front of us. You cannot see it for the trees. Now we must go very quietly so that no one may see or hear us when we enter. Keep close behind me."

Merrill felt to make sure that his automatics were convenient to his hands. He had one in each side pocket of his overcoat. His heart was beating quickly, for there was something ominous in the sight of the shadowy outlines of a great building that suddenly came into view as they broke through the trees. It was only a confused mass, distinguishable because it seemed blacker even than the darkness.

Rose drew his head down and whispered in his ear: "Do not be startled, dear; I am going to call for Pierre. Pierre is the son of the gardener here, and it is he whom I am expecting. He knows every path in the forest and can slip through an army here."

She stepped aside, and presently Merrill heard the melancholy, quavering call of the owl. A deathly silence followed. She repeated the cry in a few moments. There was no response.

"He cannot have arrived yet," she whispered. "It is the call we children used in our play. We will go into the house. Keep close to me, and stoop as you walk."

He pressed her hand to indicate his readiness, and she glided on in the shadow of the trees, though it seemed to him that no one could have seen them if they had walked boldly across the open space. After a little while she turned toward the building and crept toward it, sheltered by clumps of shrubs. Finally she turned into a narrow avenue bordered on each side by box, and in a few moments more reached an open gateway and entered through it.

"This is the servants' end," she whispered, "and is the safest way for us to enter. No stranger would know his way from here."

Without waiting for any comment from him, she led him across a grass-grown courtyard, and entered by a narrow door into a low-ceiled room. Across this she glided like a wraith and passed through several other rooms of varying dimensions, through narrow passageways, up and down low flights of stairs, until at last she stopped.

"This," she whispered, "is the great dining hall. Here is where I meet the German officer who comes for what I bring."

## CHAPTER XVI.

**W**AIT a few moments and listen," Rose whispered, and then, after a lapse of time: "I hear nothing."

The silence was uncanny. "I hear nothing," he returned in a low tone.

"Turn on the electric lamp," she said, and he did so. The stream of light shot startlingly through the thick gloom and showed a large table in the middle of a large, rectangular room of great height.

"There is a candle with matches on

the table. We will light it first. That will show Pierre I am here."

There was something weird and ghastly about the whole proceeding, but Merrill held his nerves taut and did as he was bidden. "Now give me the lamp," Rose said, "and we will go wait for Pierre. He should be here, but I suppose he has been detained." She turned the light toward one end of the great room, still only faintly illumined by the double light of candle and electric lamp. "There is the great stairway which leads to the guest chambers. Here"—she turned the light toward the other end of the room—"is the smaller stairway which leads into the oldest part of the château. My aunt and uncle had their rooms there, and there also are the secret rooms and passages which were needed in the bad, old times. We will go up there and wait for Pierre, who always comes by a secret way, so that if there should be any watchers he will not be seen."

She led the way up the flight of stairs and through a door into a long corridor. At the farther end she opened the door into a room and entered it. "This is my room," she said, turning the light so that he might see it.

It was all in disarray, as if it had been rudely occupied and left in its disorder, but Merrill felt a thrill as he looked about it and saw the evidences of Rose's one-time life there.

"The Germans came here when the war first broke out, not knowing it belonged to my cousin. It has not been used since the first month, but no one has had the heart to restore it to order. I saw many happy days here."

She sighed and turned toward a massive wardrobe that seemed built into the room. She pressed a corner of the paneling, and then pushed the wardrobe. It moved slowly and silently to one side. "Friedrich and I loved these secret places and always kept them oiled. Pierre does so now. Come!

We will go to Pierre's room and wait for him."

Through a narrow opening disclosed by the movement of the wardrobe Merrill followed her. She closed the opening as easily as she had opened it. The passageway was so narrow that Merrill was obliged to turn sidewise to move through.

It was not long, and ended at a small door, which Rose opened. She still held the electric lamp, the light from which illumined a small room simply furnished with a narrow bed, a small table, and two chairs. Almost as she opened the door she uttered a low cry of horror and ran to the bed. Merrill, following closely, saw a young man lying on the bed, one leg hanging over the side as if he had dropped there and been unable to move afterward.

"Pierre, Pierre!" she moaned as she stooped over him. "Oh, he is dead! They have killed him!"

Merrill took the light from her, and, gently pushing her aside, bent over the boy, for he was hardly more. He opened his jacket, and instantly saw a great stain of blood. A further examination, however, showed that he still lived.

"You have no brandy?" Merrill asked.

"Alas, no!" she answered, her hands clinging together in an effort to suppress any audible expression of her grief. "Is he alive?"

"Yes, he is still alive. You can get some water perhaps?"

"There is some here." She brought him a pitcher of water from the table. "Is he badly wounded?"

"Very; but he will recover consciousness, I think."

He worked over him for a few minutes, and presently had the satisfaction of seeing him open his eyes.

"Pierre, Pierre!" she cried, kneeling beside him. "It is Rose."

A glad, eager expression lit up his

rugged face, and he tried to rise. Merrill gently restrained him. "*Dieu merci!*" he gasped. "I was afraid they would get you, too. They were waiting for me, but I broke away. They shot me, but I got here. I am done, *n'est-ce pas?* But, yes, I know it. Who— who——"

"This is a dear friend, Pierre, and a friend of France. He is a doctor, too, *mon pauvre*, and he will know what to do for you. You can save him, *mon ami?* He is my little playmate, and so faithful and true. You can save him?"

Pierre watched Merrill's face, and then smiled sweetly. "No, he cannot save me; I can see that. *Eh bien!* It is for France. Listen, Mamselle Rose! I have the paper here." He tried to indicate his inner pocket, but could only lift his arm. "Wasn't it lucky the Boches shot me on the other side? You will see it is not torn or soiled. Take it out, if you please?"

Rose, winking the tears out of her eyes, felt in his pocket and took out a folded sheet of thin paper. "Always so loyal, so brave!" she murmured.

"Don't cry for me, Mamselle Rose. If I have helped France I am content." He closed his eyes and seemed to be falling into unconsciousness, and then with a start opened them and tried once more to rise, staring eagerly at Rose. "Pig that I am, I was forgetting," he gasped. "You, you, Mamselle Rose! They suspect you; they are after you, too. Fly! Fly quickly. The secret passage—Captain Friedrich——"

He fell back, dead.

Rose looked up at Merrill. He shook his head. "It is over for him, dear."

He leaned over and straightened the body and covered it with a sheet from the bed; then he lifted the sobbing girl to her feet and held her in his arms, saying nothing, but showing his sympathy by his tender embrace. For a little while she sobbed; then gained her self-control. "He was only twenty,"

she said. "How many games we played together in this very room, he and Friedrich and I! And now he is gone."

"He died like a brave man, dear. And they who killed him are waiting for you. We must go, dear."

"That is true, *mon ami*; we must go. Let me think a moment. He spoke of Friedrich. What did he mean? Can Friedrich be here? Oh, no, no! Friedrich would never have let them shoot his old playmate."

"He may not have known him in the darkness. Is there some way by which we can leave? He spoke of a secret passage. Did he mean the one by which we came?"

"No, there is an underground passage that leads to a cave. To reach it we must go to the cellar! Here! You take this paper; it will be safer with you. Now let us go. And we must leave Pierre here."

"There is nothing else to do, dear, and he is beyond all harm now. Come! No doubt the château is surrounded, and they may invade the château at any moment."

"They may be here now. That candle will tell them I am here. Back through my room will be the best way. There is another way—the one by which Pierre came here, but that takes us through the dining hall. The cave is on the north side of the château, which makes it more difficult to reach our car, but it is the only way. Turn off the light and we will go." She turned and looked at the silent form under the sheet. "Adieu, my brave Pierre!"

They went silently through the narrow passage, Rose leading the way. After pushing aside the wardrobe she stood listening intently before stepping into the room.

"I hear nothing," she whispered, "but something tells me there are others in the house."

Merrill held the flash light in his left

hand, his right grasping an automatic ready for use. Whether because of his knowledge that there were soldiers in the neighborhood or from a veritable consciousness, he felt as Rose did—that they were not alone in the château.

They crept softly across the room and out into the corridor. Even there was no sound. A few paces to the left, Rose stopped and whispered: "The staircase is here. It is inclosed on both sides and leads to a little private dining room, which we used when we were here without guests. It is unlikely that any one is there."

They crept down, and presently were in the room below. Rose closed the door behind them, and then shrank silently close to Merrill. Both of them had a sudden uncanny sense of not being alone in the room, although there was no sound.

"Don't move!" a voice commanded in German. "Is that you, Rose?"

"Friedrich!" she breathed. "You here?"

"Hans, light the lamp!" A heavy footfall crossed from the other side of the room, and presently a match was struck and by its light they could see clearly enough a soldier at the table with the match, two more soldiers against the opposite wall, and on the same side with themselves an officer.

Rose put a little distance between herself and Merrill before the light from the lamp flared up and revealed everything clearly.

"Who is that with you?" Friedrich demanded curtly.

"Lesbin, my chauffeur."

"Lesbin! Oh, yes. Lesbin, stand over there!"

Merrill's wits worked quickly. There were four men against him, but if he played his part properly perhaps there was a chance yet. He dropped his automatic into his side pocket, saluted in the German manner, and stepped away; not exactly to where the captain

had indicated, but in a spot of his own choosing.

"What are you doing here, Friedrich?" Rose demanded.

"Spy catching," he snapped. "I thought you would come this way after seeing that traitor up there."

"Traitor!" flared Rose. "Patriot! And you shot him?"

"By my orders, little cousin."

"Your old playmate! Oh, you brute!"

He was, as Merrill could see, a handsome young fellow of perhaps twenty-three, but already a typical German officer. He tried to smile at her words, but it was a snarl that twisted his lips.

"Always ready with hard names, little cousin," he said. "I could call hard names, too, it seems to me. You who have pretended to serve the Fatherland and have sold yourself to the enemy. But this is the end. You will go with me, and we will know how to put an end to your activities. Attention!" he snapped at the soldiers. "One of you on each side of the prisoner and one behind."

Merrill had watched and listened, every nerve on edge, and all the while an odd questioning was going on within him: Would he be equal to the occasion? He had caught a glance from Rose, but had given no sign, for he had seen the eyes of Friedrich follow her glance.

Now his chance had come: It was singular how it should pop into his head at that moment that he had told the chief that he had never shot a man, and now he meant to do it in cold blood. He knew his hand had never been steadier, his will more fixed, his conscience more clear. He waited till the men had come to attention, and then had whipped out his automatic and fired—one, two, three!

The men threw up their arms and dropped, whether dead or not he neither knew nor cared. He wouldn't have

counted fifty lives against Rose's safety. He had been as swift as thought almost, but there had been time for Friedrich to realize what was taking place and to enable him to draw and fire his own revolver.

Merrill saw the spit of flame as he turned and pointed his weapon at the captain. He felt a burning sensation in his left shoulder, but his automatic never wavered, and his voice was as cold as ice as he said: "Drop that pistol or I'll kill you! Drop it!"

The weapon dropped from the captain's hand, and his face was ghastly white. He looked from Merrill to Rose with the air of a trapped rat. He sensed that this could not be the Lesbin he had been told of, but yet he did not understand.

"What shall we do with him, Rose?" Merrill demanded. "I would like to kill him. Shall I?"

He may not have been in the mood to do as he said, but certainly he looked it, and indeed, when he thought of what this man would have done to Rose, he was filled with rage. Captain Friedrich had no doubt in his own mind, for a look of terror came into his eyes and he turned pleadingly toward Rose. She shuddered and held up her hand in a gesture of negation. She loathed this man who had once been a loved playmate, but she could not see him shot down, no matter what his intentions toward her might have been. "No," she said, "let him live."

Merrill crossed over to her and addressed Friedrich menacingly: "You have more men. Where are they?"

He could see him take a long breath of relief; then he was sure he saw a shifty, treacherous expression creep into the pale-blue eyes. He evidently contemplated some trick.

"They are outside," Friedrich answered, but it seemed to Merrill that he was listening, and he knew he lied.

"He is a German, therefore a liar,"

said Merrill to Rose scornfully. "We must get away at once. Which way?"

Rose looked at Friedrich for a moment. "Yes," she said sadly, "he is lying. And why not? He could kill his old playmate and he would have carried me to my death. He is not to be trusted. We must take him with us. Through that door," and she pointed to a door on the opposite side of the room.

"Open it!" Merrill snapped in fierce command. "And remember that if you try to play us a trick I'll shoot you."

Friedrich crossed the room with such alacrity that Merrill suspected him at once. "Stop!" he cried, and hardly had the word left his lips when there came from the other side of the door the sound of heavy, hurrying feet.

"This way, Rose!" He turned and opened the door by which they had entered. He kept his automatic leveled at Friedrich, who had stopped as if turned to stone. "You hound!" he said hoarsely.

Rose sprang through the door, and, Merrill following, closed it after him. They both ran up swiftly, but before they were halfway up the stairs the door was snatched open and a shot was fired. Friedrich had snatched up his pistol from the floor and had leaped to the door.

Merrill was behind Rose, but they were on opposite sides of the staircase. He heard the *sipp!* of the bullet as it passed him, and then a low cry from Rose, who almost immediately stumbled. A strangled cry broke from Merrill. He turned and fired down the stairs, and then lifted Rose and carried her to the top.

"My room!" she gasped.

He carried her along the corridor, feeling with one hand for the door. When he reached it he threw it open and entered the room, closing the door behind him and bolting it.

"The bullet hit you," he said, trying to be calm.

"Yes, dear, and I feel very weak," she answered in a low tone in which there was a note of pain. "Take me to the wardrobe."

He carried her over to it, not daring to hesitate because he heard the rush of heavy feet on the stairs. She pressed the hidden spot, and the wardrobe was easily moved aside.

"Perhaps I can walk," she murmured; "the passage is so narrow."

"I can carry you." With difficulty he squeezed through the opening, holding her as tenderly as possible. She closed the opening, saying: "Friedrich knows the secret, but I think he won't come because one man could so easily defend it. Oh, my love! I am—I am——" Evidently she had fainted.

He gently placed her on the floor and drew out his flash light. She was breathing faintly, and to his horror there was blood on her lips. He forgot everything in his anguish but to minister to her need. He leaped to the pitcher of water, and, kneeling beside her, wiped her lips and wet her face.

She opened her eyes in a moment and smiled up at him. "Am I dying, darling?" she asked faintly.

"Oh, no, no!" he answered passionately. "I will find the wound and you will be all right in a little while. It was in the back."

"Yes, dear." She smiled again. "Never mind the wound; I know I shall not live. Hold me in your arms; hold me close. Oh, my darling! How I have loved you! Kiss me! Good-by!"

She sank, limp, into his arms. He could feel a faint beating of her heart, but terror seized him. He turned the light to her lips. There was a bloody froth there. The bullet had entered the lung. But that need not be fatal. He must examine the wound. He would know how serious it was when he knew where the bullet had entered. He pulled himself together, remembering that he was a surgeon and that it was

his duty to be cold and calm. He took her arms from about his neck and put her gently down.

Suddenly a door was slid to one side and two men leaped in. He made no attempt to escape or even to shut off his light. They leveled their rifles at him.

"Ah," came in the sneering voice of Friedrich, "the tables are turned now!" He entered the room.

"She is not dead," Merrill said, careless of himself. "I am a surgeon and I may be able to save her. I will not try to escape if you will send your men away so that I may make an examination."

Friedrich made a sign to the men as he saw Merrill look down into the white face. They sprang at him, and caught him, one on each side. He made no struggle, his mind on but one thing.

"Do you not understand?" he said. "She was shot in the back, and she will die if she is not given proper attention. I am a surgeon. I will not try to escape. You don't want her to die."

"Take him downstairs!" commanded Friedrich.

Merrill kept control of himself. He wanted to leap at the young brute and choke him, but he knew that in a mêlée in that tiny room Rose would be trampled on. "What I tell you is true," he said evenly. "I am a surgeon, and if she can be saved I can do it, but no time must be lost. Surely you don't want your cousin to die?"

Friedrich, seeing that Merrill was held by the two men, went to Rose and leaned over her, placing his hand on her heart.

"She is dead now," he said. "Take him downstairs!"

The men stolidly pushed him toward the opening. He must know if she were dead or not. He flung the men off and leaped to the side of Rose and looked down into her face so still and white. He felt above her heart; he could detect no movement.

He looked up at the young captain to tell him that the evidence was not conclusive, when, at a sign already given by Friedrich, one of the men struck him over the head with the butt of his rifle, and he fell senseless over the body of his love.

TO BE CONCLUDED.





# When Ghosts Walked

By  
Christopher  
Bannister



WE must die, Walter."

"There is hope."

"Not in this world, Walter."

"I know the danger, Anita, but we haven't been recognized in London."

"Fanny Leland saw me this morning. She knew me, I'm sure she did, for with my veil and all she acted as if she had seen a ghost." Anita Demar stretched out her arms as if imploring safety from the skies. "But we have been over this all, so many, many times, Walter; and it all comes back to the beginning. No one identifies us, but some one will. You can find work, but it all goes black and sordid. George must be here now, and that means prison for you and open disgrace to me. We must end it now, while it is beautiful."

"But, Anita——" and there was some new note of hopefulness in the young fellow's voice that lifted her face from the hands into which she had let it droop despondently.

"Yes, Walter?" There was hope in her voice, too.

"I met such a fine fellow this morning, an Englishman. He must have seen something in my face, the fate of

it all, for he asked me if I needed a friend. He'd help us."

"Oh, Walter, and you confided in him! You always do, poor dear; you confided in me."

"Yes," he replied, the color in his cheek proving how shrewd her surmise had been; "I told him a little. I—we exchanged cards. Here," he added, taking one from his case and reading, "'Sir John Memory.' Good name, isn't it?"

"Oh, Walter, 'Memory!'" There was the touch of doom in what she said. "Dear, we cannot go too quickly; it must be soon. Here, let me have your cards. Why didn't you throw them overboard with the rest?"

Walter Scarsdale handed her the little leather case with drooping head.

"There!" said the girl—she was nothing more, in years—as she dropped it into the lodgings fire which was the one bright thing in their London that day. "There, Walter, it has to be. Your name is on the case."

A long, slow silence fell upon them. The end was near at hand. A few hours—well, they would still be united.

It was the inevitably tragic end to a

roinance that had seemed so simple to the thoughtless, luckless pair in New York, so simple to work out, and to live happily ever after. Walter Scarsdale, the son of an old friend, was George Demar's confidential secretary. Anita Demar was his wife and a generation younger in years, but Demar worshiped her. Yet for this untoward romance he was not blameless. He had married her knowing she did not love him, bringing to bear upon her youth the pressure of needy kinsfolk, the support of an aging father and mother, the education of her younger brothers: she had been driven into it from her very lack of experience.

Walter's and Anita's passion was a conclusion foregone from the first, an infatuation sent by some divine decree such as the ancients recognized and tenderly commiserated while the modern world has nothing but scorn and revilings to wait upon detection.

She was going to Europe with friends, a great party of them. London, Paris, the Riviera, possibly Egypt: how much better than the keen American winter already begun! But madness was in their blood, the madness the gods send to those whom they would destroy. Scarsdale, laying his plans well, contrived to have his unsuspecting employer and friend send him to England at the same time, investments there demanding the presence of some one on the spot. And at the last minute, the very day the *Graustark* sailed, they changed every plan, rushed to the steamer at Montreal under an assumed name as man and wife, and cut the world from under their feet.

Nor was this all. Their luggage was already aboard the *Graustark*. Scarsdale, remembering the need for new wardrobes for them both, rushed back to Demar's office, possessed himself of all the available currency in the vault, and rushed away. Too late he realized

that in so doing he had severed the last strand in the web of his former destiny. It was symbolic when, with the solemnity of a rite, the couple crept on deck together their first night out—oh, what a night it was—all that they had worn from home in a weighted bundle under Mrs. Demar's newly purchased cloak, and consigned their part to the star-lit, austere Atlantic. The hasty belongings they had gathered in the Canadian capital must suffice them until they reached London. London attained, they must suffice them until the end.

They arrived in Liverpool happy and unrecognized. There is little travel in mid-December, and no one on the ship suspected more than that they were bride and bridegroom in the splendor of their honeymoon. Their keeping to themselves in such circumstances was entirely natural, quite a matter of course. And they were happy, oh, so happy! Even death could not dim that, and it gave them courage to look into each other's eyes and smile, now, with death at their elbow.

On the train from Liverpool to London came the beginning of the end. The *Graustark*, great and gallant ship, laden with the happiness of hundreds, sank almost within sight of the statue of Liberty. An appalling explosion blew the mighty vessel into fragments amidships, and all the hasty succor on the sea, tugs and yachts, harbor boats and torpedo craft, availed only to save a score of lives. An anarchist plot, some powerful explosive in the coal, an infernal machine infernally effective, was the sole conjecture a press, frenzied at the horror of it, could frame.

Buying on the dock the papers they had not seen and had not missed on their voyage, Walter and Anita had settled back in the speeding train to connect themselves tardily with the world they had deemed well lost. The

first newspaper they opened had their names in the fatal list "Mrs. George Dearkin Demar," and, after a long roll of women both had known, "Walter Scarsdale" far down the somber roster of friends and acquaintances. Their dream of future safety vanished in the thought that a respite had been granted them—but what a respite! It was a doom escaped pointing forward to a doom from which there was no escape. They became, on the instant, living ghosts.

They followed with staring eyes the multiple disaster down through the week in a diminuendo of accorded space, and on the third day read that George D. Demar, following his physician's advice, had taken ship for London, seeking distraction through travel from the blow that had almost stricken him down. Heavens! Were ghosts already half disembodied to be followed by such a Nemesis as the presence and personality implied?

It had been Scarsdale's thought to write from London concerning the money he had taken; that was impossible now without betraying the existence of Anita. Vengeance lay ready to the hand of a husband and friend outraged and betrayed, and the betrayer knew of old that George Demar could be implacable. The taking of the money was turned into a crime; recognition in London meant denunciation, extradition, a trial in New York, and the penitentiary. If he had had wit enough to leave an acknowledgement of the amount, all prospect of accord would not have been so completely lost. But disgrace for Anita, prison for himself? He could face neither. They were condemned to die by the very terms of their living and loving. From the first pallid stare into the future on that rushing train they accepted the skeleton hand that held them in its grasp.

At the station in London they made

appeal to a wise old cabman for a shelter. With the worldly knowledge of his kind he saw in a young woman so simply clad and heavily veiled and a tall, bearded man with colored spectacles, that concealment of identity but not of intent which prompted him to his course. He drove them far from the haunts to which their evident station entitled them, leagues away from the London they and their kind had always known, and left them, outlawed from civilization.

There, in lodgings as comfortable as contracted space allows, ministered to by an elderly Frenchwoman who found in their youth and grace and palpable romance momentary forgetfulness of her own exile, they had lived another week of terror and delight, and had already planned their end. In its details they discovered an excitement like that in the self-appalling tales of childhood or in the stories of mystery Poe drew from his melancholy brain. For their tragic purpose there remained just money enough—in the wildness of their passion that had been too slight a consideration hitherto—for keeping up the comedy of life until the final curtain, but not enough to secure them even another week of delights. Dead to the world already through the *Graustark's* calamity, aware now of the weight of the world's judgment, they could merely plan to go together and go gayly, and without it being known.

In the searching of hearts and weighing of means that day in the train, Walter and Anita had decided to live the year through, no more—no more was possible. Everything they had had of intrinsic value was at the bottom of the ocean, sunk with the *Graustark* or tossed overboard by their own hands. Scarsdale had thought to find work, but the fear of being confronted by Demar, already due in London, tore away that last and feeble resource.

Now the last day of sad December

was come, glooming with tempest upon the metropolis. It was already cold. The fire was growing dim, burned out by the gusts overhead. Walter rose and mended it. The thought of finality in that simple act made them both turn away and sigh: their lives would be burned out before the replenished fire went cold at last.

Their landlady had asked them, fortunately enough, if they could not wait upon themselves on this, the evening for which they had announced their departure. She explained that the New Year had too many memories to permit of her spending it away from her countryfolk, friends and lovers of *la belle France*, stranded like herself amid gloomy fogs and grimy snows. A little collation stood without, she begged to inform them, as she bade them good luck and wished them a happy New Year, *bonne fortune* was theirs already, she told herself as she went out into the storm.

The fire burned bright again, and in its light Anita Demar sat sewing, changing with deft fingers the evening wrap and dinner gown bought in Montreal, until their maker could not have identified them. She went painstakingly over every detail of her wardrobe and Walter's, making certain that no mark of the past remained. There was plenty to do, though the details had long been arranged and provided for. A cab was to drive them and their scanty luggage to King's Cross, as if for the night express to Edinburgh. Another cab would carry them to the Hotel Delapole in time for supper after they had forwarded their effects to the North.

Walter had sought through the pawnshops, their number attesting the poverty of the neighborhood they were sojourning in, until he found two deringers, carrying large bullets effective perhaps at short range only, but terrifyingly effective there. Perhaps it was

the explosion which sank the *Gravstark* that brought it to his mind, but he had made that morning an excursion to the West End for the first time since his arrival, securing in a gunshop there explosive cartridges large enough to kill an elephant, yet fitting these little engines of destruction perfectly. It was just after their purchase that he was spoken to by Sir John Memory. If his reflections showed in his face, he certainly looked as if he needed a friend.

Similarly, Mrs. Demar had fallen under the observation of Fanny Leland when she went to buy the hair dye that was to change herself and Walter beyond the power of even shattered recognition. This had been the last detail planned, and it might not have been carried out but for the Memory and Leland episodes. Anita no less than Scarsdale was determined to spend these final moments in a scene of joy, in a spot the very publicity of which would act as a deterrent to successful inquiry.

The pair stood clasped heart to heart before they went to make the changes in their appearance they deemed necessary. The sigh of an hour before became a sob as they parted. When they returned to the little sitting room—the fire had grown dim again—Anita's glorious golden locks were bronzed to the color of an autumn leaf; Walter's beard was gone, and his auburn hair and eyebrows stained dark brown. They laughed at sight of one another like children preparing for charades. Their work was thorough—they had even spoken of the morgue, where vulgar crowds sought gruesome pastime and the unhappy fold their lost, hoping as they searched that they would not be found—there.

Both were in evening dress. Walter's pistols were loaded, and extra cartridges slipped into his waistcoat pocket. All that was required was nerve enough

to pull the trigger, once and yet again, and they had thrown themselves upon the mercy of an hereafter, shadowed indeed, but more pitiful than the present, as God must ever be more pitiful than man. The clock struck. It was chilly, but what need now to mend the fire!

He counted over their scanty supply of money, finding just enough to pay for the cabs, the tickets to Edinburgh, and a plentiful supper. All was done, and the time was short to wait. They sat, Walter and Anita, glad of the duskiness of the room that they might better remember their real faces. Talk went from them, and they threw themselves into one another's arms with a cry. Never had their love been so beautiful, never life so lovely and so precious. Every caress had in it the vigor of a youth that was never to know decay, the full savor of completeness. They were at once Eros and Psyche, immortally young, Baucis and Philemon, mated until the end. The clock struck the half hour, the wheels of the cab arranged for grated on the curb before the door, one last impassioned embrace in which their hearts almost leaped through their breasts that they might touch and, the good landlady's collation forgotten, they went hand in hand down the darkened, creaking stairs and forth from the deserted and desolate house into the whistling night.

Fate, so cruel to them in the great things, smiled on the small. Everything went as they had planned. Their cab drove them to King's Cross and disappeared—they watched it—in the outer darkness. They looked for Edinburgh and saw their luggage duly sent on the fool's errand, to lie unclaimed until it passed to human ownership again through auction. A second cab sped them on to the Hotel Delapole, quiet, somewhat remote, entirely respectable, solemnly fashionable.

They were given a table tête-à-tête, in the middle of the farther side of the commodious room. All about them were parties decorously joyful, eating and drinking, waiting for the New Year to bring them the opportunity to offer one toast of happiness before the evening closed. There was a hunger in Walter's and Anita's eyes deeper than any mere appetite for food, the avid desire for life as it would be lived by every one else in the place, at least safely into the impending year; while the stroke of twelve spelled for them a darkness absolute.

They ordered jointly, gayly, extravagantly, each selecting favorite viands for the other. There was no fear of indigestion, they told one another with smiles that stopped on a sudden as the corners of their mouths drew down. Viands the most delicate, wines the most precious were theirs for an hour. Their appetite, they jested wanly, was that of condemned criminals, notoriously voracious. Such tonic as they gained from the good cheer and the atmosphere about them was needed. It would not be necessary, they noted, to pay for all this, though pay they should, of course, and with their last bill. Always the clock, its face sustained by laughing cupids, ticked away the minutes surely, immodibly, without chance for recall. It grew near twelve.

Walter took out the twenty pound note remaining to them and laid it to one side, though not until their waiter, passing to the table beyond, had eyed it wistfully. It was to be his part to deny them their last little pretense to respectability and leave them with their addition unpaid.

The cheap American watch bought to fill the place of those they had thrown in the sea—was it in a lifetime before—lay between them. Walter's feet found Anita's under the table, and there interlocked. He took the loaded derringers from his inner pocket,

cocked them under the cloth, and laid them, sheltered from observing eyes, at his right hand.

It was on the stroke of midnight, the threshold of the New Year. His left hand sought hers and clasped upon it, the pressure being as convulsively returned. Curiously, with a minute between them and death, with all their souls crying out for a closer embrace, convention was too strong.

The changing current of the dynamos dimmed the lights from white to dimly glowing red and set the arm lamps to sputtering. They all winked at once, and went out.

"Now!" cried Anita. His right hand, the derringer in its grasp, met hers and as she bent forward she guided it to the lovely space between her closed eyes.

A tremendous report rang through the hall, followed almost instantly by another even more rending, the pistols flashing through the momentary darkness.

The lights came up.  
Horror of horrors!

## II.

"What are you doing to-night, Demar?"

"Nothing in particular, Billy. It's New Year's eve, of course, and I should like to be somewhere where I can forget. A year's a long time in passing but short to look back to."

"Of course, old chap," said Billy van Slycke. "And I have just the thing for you. Remember the Hotel Delapole horror?"

"Certainly, Van. It came too close to the other for me to forget it. I reached London that very day."

"I beg your pardon, Demar. Perhaps I'd better say nothing more."

"Go on, do. What was your plan?"

"You're just back again, so you don't know what has been going on. A

month ago Madame Scarlatti, the clairvoyant—you know—announced that we were to have a repetition of that night a year ago in the weather, and that the ghosts of these two headless people are going to walk at the Hotel Delapole at midnight to-night. The newspapers have taken it up to pass off a sort of winter big gooseberry season, and the town is talking of nothing else. It's a new thing, a new kind of excitement, and every table is engaged. I heard about it as soon as I got here, and engaged a table for two. Harry Leland has been called home, and I was afraid I should have to go it alone until you turned up. Come along, that's a good fellow."

"The ghosts will walk, will they? I've never seen a ghost, Billy Van; though I have been feeling as if I had. It will be something to think about, to talk about. What time?"

"If we get there at half after ten it will be time enough to enjoy a leisurely meal and be ready to have the spooks served for dessert. I'll pick you up here as I drive by, eh?"

"Good, old fellow. I'll be waiting for you. It's going to be an awful night out. Madame what's-her-name is a good weather prophet."

"Isn't she though! It gets worse every minute. So long!" and Billy van Slycke went lightly out into the gusty street, waving a jovial hand to his friend as he stepped into his cab.

George Demar had been traveling about Europe for a year. His physician had given him the excuse, but his object was, in part, forgetfulness, in part the attempt to solve a problem his instinct rather than his reason had set him. His beautiful wife, rejoicing in her youth, had bidden him good-by a little more than a twelvemonth before in their stately city house, stipulating that he must not follow her to the steamer. It was reasonable enough, for he both detested scenes and knew

the awkwardness of waiting until the last minute for a farewell.

Her going left him lonely at heart, and love and inclination were too strong. He did not leave for his office, but waited at home until he could count on five minutes at the pier. Anita was leaving him, with his consent and approval, of course, yet greatly against his concealed inclination. He was a man of the world, and he believed that a young wife is safest with an old husband when he keeps her within call, if not within sight. One last glimpse of her he could get, at least, and he trusted that the thought of his waving to her as the great ship went out would persist, and form a tender and abiding memory.

Near the first gangway his eyes, steadily searching through the crowds for Anita's face lighted upon the figure of her maid. The instant Minnie caught his eye she ran down to him.

"Oh, Mr. Demar, my lady has not come!" she cried.

"Nonsense, Minnie," he replied. "She left the house more than an hour ago. She was going to her friends, and then directly here."

"Yes, Mr. Demar; but I have looked all over the boat and I can't find a trace of her. None of the other ladies have seen her, either."

"Where's Mr. Scarsdale?"

"I don't know, sir. I haven't seen him. I looked for him the first thing when I couldn't find Mrs. Demar."

"They have probably wandered down to look at some of the machinery, Minnie. Mr. Scarsdale is very fond of engines, and he would enjoy seeing them start. You look for them in the engine room."

The girl did not move, however, until the last warning was given, when she impulsively held out her hand to her master before she reluctantly went aboard. He remained as reluctantly ashore, and he was always glad

afterward that he had taken Minnie's hand. It was well that the ending of so much of his happy life should have been marked by a token of interest and affection, however slight.

Of course Anita was on the ship, his reason told him, lying down perhaps in one of the several cabins secured for her party, if he had not already guessed rightly in saying that she was in the engine room with Walter. But he disliked puzzles, even when they were not particularly intricate.

Demar drove from the pier to his office and there, had he been a suspicious man, he would have found another puzzle awaiting him. The bookkeeper bade him good morning, and ventured the remark that he would be lonely without Mr. Scarsdale.

"Did you see him at the boat, sir? He was in here about an hour ago."

"What brought him back?" asked Demar quickly.

"I don't know, sir. He went to the vault a minute, shook hands with me, and bolted out. He had plenty of time, too."

Demar went to the vault, and found the cash box stripped of its contents. "Oh," he said to himself, "the silly boy was afraid he hadn't money enough." He looked for some acknowledgment of the amount, and, failing to find any memorandum, told the bookkeeper to charge the cash then on hand to Mr. Scarsdale's personal account. There was no puzzle about that, surely. Walter was very boyish about some things.

When, an hour later, the city thrilled and shuddered at the calamity that befell the *Graustark*, George Demar's instinct again caught at the chance that Anita had missed the boat after all. He was only less shocked by the loss of Walter Scarsdale, for he loved the boy like a son, as he had loved his father like a brother. It was this sentiment in the back of his mind that Anita might have escaped that had sent

him to London, to Paris, to Vienna and Berlin, traveling the year through over Europe in the hopeless and irrational hope that she might, some day, somewhere, appear to him. Of the actualities in the case he had no least suspicion. Was she not his wife? Was not Walter his son in everything but blood? So passed the first weary twelve months of his widowerhood. The rest of it, stretching on to the end, was to be more weary, more dismal, absolutely devoid of hope.

During his wanderings the thought came to him, too, that his conscience was not clear in the matter. Every day he felt her taking-off to be a judgment upon him for binding her in a loveless marriage. He knew—what man does not—that he had not made her completely happy, that he had not implanted in her heart a tithe of the affection he had so earnestly striven to sow there. Toward the end—and it was poor consolation—she had seemed more buoyant, less given to the attacks of depression that had kept her secluded in her room from time to time. Could his very love have driven her to the fatal ship? Had she been glad to leave him? These unanswered queries gave added poignancy to his grief.

All in good time, though unusually late for an engineer who was the soul of punctuality, Billy van Slycke came bustling up from his cab, the wind howling through the door as he entered. He stopped to rub his hands over the bright fire on the hearth.

"Madame Scarlatti is certainly a wonder!" he exclaimed. "The evening papers are full of it. If she was right about the weather the ghosts are surely going to walk. There'll be a crowd at the Delapole."

The older man had himself carefully wrapped against the inclement night, told his servant to wait up for him, congratulated Billy on getting a coupé that pretended to be heated, and they soon

exchanged the worst weather of even a London winter for the warmth and hospitable brightness of the great dining room of the Hotel Delapole. They made their way through a dissatisfied throng of well-dressed men and women, and were only to gain progress by answering the repeated question of the attendants along the corridor with the assurance that seats had been reserved for them. Evidently the comments of the press had overcome the difficulties of the night.

"The English always were a hardy race," was Billy's comment.

When they were safely seated at last, and had shivered away the last chill of the storm without, both of them noted with amusement that the hardness of the English race did not extend to ghosts in prospect as fully as to weather in being. There was an anxiety in the room, and a glancing over the shoulder as if something might creep up behind. In the occasional lulls in the quiet conversation and the business of the waiters, the storm could be heard bellowing overhead. They smiled at first themselves, but were still not entirely proof against the general feeling of apprehension in the room.

"That's the table, yonder," said Billy, indicating where Walter Scarsdale and Anita Demar had seated themselves a year before, almost to a minute. Tonight it was the only vacancy in the room. "She was sitting bolt upright, what was left of her, held in place by their clenched hands. He was down on the table. They'll be headless ghosts, Demar."

"Don't, Billy." Demar shuddered. "And there wasn't a clue?"

"Not a thing, not a recognizable thing. The coroner's surgeon said that both had dyed their hair and very lately, but he wouldn't venture to tell what the original color had been, except that it was lighter."

"What color was it dyed?"



"Great Scott!" There was a bustle throughout the room.

"Do you see those people? There, they're going to sit down at that table!"

A man and a woman were being escorted to the fatal spot, and the room grew deathly quiet, every head turned to watch.

"Of course I see them. I'd be the only one in the room that doesn't."

"Well they answer the printed description exactly. He's tall, smooth shaven, and with dark brown hair. She's plump and with red bronze hair—that's just the picture of the mysterious couple in the papers to-night."

"Is it possible!" Demar's interest, like the others, had a loathly fascination in it. He went back to the conversation before the interruption. "What was done with their clothing, with the pistols?"

"Whose?" asked Billy abstractedly, his eyes glued to the newly arrived couple. "Oh, yes. The police have everything, with photographs of the bodies and a description of the little moles and blemishes everybody has somewhere. But there was nothing and nobody to tell who they were and why they were in London. The cabman that drove them here picked them up at King's Cross—there all knowledge of them ended. It's getting chilly in here, don't you think so?" Billy shivered.

"Who has the hardihood to sit at the very table where it happened?" asked Demar, at once revolted and attracted as he gazed at the newcomers.

Billy called the head waiter, as soon as his attention could be diverted from the queries being fired at him on every side.

"It's Sir John and Lady Memory, sir," the functionary replied to a repetition of the question. "He's a brave man, sir. Victoria Cross, sir, and they say he has a great wager laid on it."

He went to convey his information to the next table.

"Oh," said the Americans with instant comprehension, and fell to their food, though both felt their appetites less keen than the dinner warranted.

As it came on toward midnight, it was increasingly evident that a sense of the ghastliness of it all, the unnerving incongruity of outward gayety and feasting as if to celebrate a deed that had shocked civilization, had worked its way into the being of every guest at the tables, Van Slycke and Demar not excepted.

The hotel management, palpably pleased that what had promised to be avoidance of the place on such an anniversary had turned out the direct and prosperous reverse, was eagerly striving to do its best. Extra waiters hovered about, ready to be of service at the slightest hint. Many of them were busied with bottles of wine, with decanters and siphons, for there was an abnormal amount of heavy drinking—another sign of widespread apprehension. From this the waiters themselves suffered, and many of them, as the evening drew toward its close, exhibited symptoms of drunkenness.

A little before twelve o'clock, one of these befuddled attendants dropped an armful of dishes in the upper end of the hall. The crash was followed by screams from several of the women, and then by a depressing silence—momentary, but none the less noticeable. It was broken by hysterical laughing and crying that set every one on edge, and a charmingly dressed woman was led from the room by her mortified escort, her feelings quite beyond her control.

Now, as the year was rushing on to its doom, there was a consultation of timepieces on every hand, and a reaching nervously forward for glasses of wine or whisky and water every moment. The Americans drank more

than they had intended to, and were sitting, taciturn and foreboding.

"They never found the man who had been waiting on them, did they, Van?" said Demar, to make himself talk.

"No," replied Billy, rousing himself to the question with evident effort. "He was last seen running through the pantry. He never came back."

"And they left nothing to pay for their supper?"

"Not a sou markee," said Billy. "There wasn't anything of value on either of them, not a coin or a scrap of paper."

"Poor devils!"

They fell silent again, their gaze, restlessly straying about the room, always returning to the table where Sir John and Lady Memory were sitting. As it came closer to twelve, the whole company hushed. A woman, flushed with wine, laughed aloud, and was frowned into immediate quietude from every side. The nerves of a roomful were stretched almost to breaking point.

The clock, its laughing cupids still in mockery about it, came to midnight. Nothing happened. Those who had been holding their watches open in their hands gave a sigh of relief as they returned them to their pockets. The New Year, temporarily forgotten, would have been toasted in another minute. A few had already taken their glasses in their hands. The storm could be heard howling overhead.

Then the lights, responsive to the changing dynamos at that hour, began to go down, down, until they showed again a dim and ominous red, and the sharp crackling of the arc lights sent a shiver through the room. The shrieking wind was all that could be heard, the waiters as they bent forward to their tasks stiffening as they stooped. Every eye sought the fatal table through the gathering dusk, where Sir

John, smiling now, sat fingering a visiting card.

Without further warning the lights flashed into undue and blinding brilliancy, and as suddenly expired. The wind rose to a howl, and a cold blast swept though the half light. At that instant there were two sharp reports in succession, ringing through the hall. Scream upon scream arose from the women, those horrifying, shrilling screams that bespeak mortal agony. The deep groan of a man's voice could be heard. The room was still lighted by the candelabra on each table, and it could be seen that all about the hall men were trying to soothe their frightened companions.

"Some one is hurt," exclaimed Van Slycke. "See, right back of you there, a man is covered with blood."

As Demar turned, his veins running cold, there was a crash and roar overhead, and a gust of freshing air swept down upon the tables, extinguishing the last glimmer of light. A patter of flying feet was heard, and instant panic would have piled up the roomful of people at the doorway had not Van Slycke, his engineering experience giving him presence of mind, put his hands to his mouth and let out a stentorian shout that demanded attention.

"Sit down, you damned fools!" he yelled. "Are Englishmen afraid of spooks? Sit down, I say; you'll kill your women."

From the front of the hotel, from the pantry, came men with white faces running with lights. They were hardly needed, for the electric lights returned to duty, and the room grew red and then brilliantly white once more.

The company was on its feet, every head turned and neck craned to see the fatal table. It was vacant. With a cry a woman fainted—one of Sir John's many friends in the place. No one could have seated himself again. Tremblingly they filed through the cor-

ridor, a silent, sober and frightened crowd. For once, the Hotel Delapole had seen the pretended human anxiety to see ghosts walk, fully appeased.

The next morning Billy van Slycke rushed in upon George Demar. Early as it was and after such a night, he was up and dressed.

"Happy New Year to you!" said the irrepressible engineer. "Have you seen the papers?"

"No," said the older man. "Happy New Year! Is there anything new?"

"They're poking a good deal of fun at us," Billy replied. "Of course the tricks the lights played on us were due to the storm hitting the wires somewhere, and the two reports were from the arc globes cracked by the cold wind; one or two were cut a little by the falling pieces. The cold blast was from a skylight that blew out. That's all simple enough. And Sir John apologizes through the newspapers for his abrupt retirement, but his Lady fainted and he felt he had to carry her out at once. He has paid for it, of course—loses his wager—it was for a thousand pounds. But that isn't all."

"It rather spoils the ghost story, though, doesn't it?" suggested Demar.

"No, it doesn't," contradicted Van Slycke abruptly. "It doesn't. Sir John inadvertently left a card on the table, and it was Walter Scarsdale's."

"Walter Scarsdale's! Why, you know he went down on the *Graustark* a year ago," said Demar, incredulous and amazed.

"That's just it. Let's go and see him about it. He'll be home on New Year's Day."

The two men took Billy's cab for Sir John's town house, the paper giving them the address. They were shown into his study by the footman, and Sir John, dignified, but with an eager interrogatory in his manner, came in immediately.

The two visitors introduced them-

selves, apologized, and stated their errand.

"I expected you," said the baronet in reply. "Madame Scarlatti told me two Americans would call to-day."

Somewhat dismayed, but impelled by his natural energy to act as spokesman, Billy went on.

"We were warm friends of Scarsdale's," he explained. "I was his chum in college, and Mr. Demar here was a friend of his father's as well. You know he went down on the *Graustark*, a little more than a year ago."

"Then it was not he who gave me that card," replied Sir John. "For it was handed me in London a year ago yesterday morning by a man about my height, with a sandy beard and slightly darker hair."

"That's the man," said Van Slycke.

Demar's face was gray. "Then he did not go down on the *Graustark*, Van," he said.

"Most surprising, gentlemen," commented Sir John. "We seem to be beginning another mystery, do we not?"

But the Americans were too full of their own thoughts. They thanked Sir John, declined the proffered refreshments, and went out into the street.

"Demar, I think I ought to tell you, now, that Leland told me Fanny saw Anita's ghost the same morning that Sir John met Scarsdale's."

"Billy," said George Demar, "I feel completely done up."

"All right, old chap," responded Van, sympathetically; "but I'm going to have a look at the photographs of those bodies."

Demar's eyes caught and held his countryman's. "Don't go, Billy, don't go. I thought of it, but I'm not going."

There was a flash of comprehension and the younger man's hand went out. "I won't," he said, "if you won't, Demar. I loved Walter."

"I won't, Billy," George Demar said with a sigh. "I loved—his father."



# Soldiers and Sailors Personal Relief Section



## What We Think.

A HIGH official recently delivered a speech at the Forum Luncheon of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. He said in part that "The soldiers to-day are not staying unemployed as a body. Figures are hard to get, but I am convinced that the large majority of the soldiers who are discharged find jobs quickly and go to them promptly. It is a minority of the men who don't seem to be able to place themselves."

We disagree with this official, for it is our experience, through intimate contact with returning soldiers and sailors, that the average man finds it hard to get a job, and it is the exceptional man who secures a position. The opinion of the country seems to concur with the gentleman above, and we are grandiosely patting ourselves on the back, meeting our soldiers with bands and speeches and parades and sandwiches and smiles, but in the meanwhile our heroes who went across the water return and literally walk the streets endeavoring to find honest work. It is a condition that may lead to serious labor troubles in the United States. The regrettable part of it is that such a state of affairs is absolutely unnecessary. If it had not been for a few of the very wealthy people in the coun-

try even the department devoted to employment under the government would have had to close. Congress adjourned and took no steps to pay its just debts to the soldiers beyond a paltry sixty dollars allotted to each man discharged—not enough money to get a complete outfit of clothes. How can we expect a man who has given up everything that he had in order to go over there to look with an optimistic eye on such a condition? His state of mind and body is something that deserves the instant and intimate attention of every patriotic citizen. We receive letters from all over the country, wherein this is shown almost without exception. Men are stranded. Their families and friends are forced to support them during the emergency. They cannot purchase new clothes. It is not dignified after a time to take a position in some very small capacity in the uniform of our country. It is not pleasant to have to go from office to office, factory to factory, et cetera, always meeting the same answer: "Leave your name and address and we will give you something if it turns up."

We feel that the gentleman who goes to meet our returning soldiers is worthy of commendation. He is a charming individual, he extends the glad hand, waves a banner, and cheers lustily. But does this affable gentleman do anything

else? Does he go out and get these men positions? Does he keep them from having to worry as to what they are going to do when they return to civilian life? In other words, does he do anything practical; does he come home with the bacon? That is the question we ask him.

We do not wish to seem pessimistic. It is not our nature. We are always inclined to find a smile where a frown ought to be, but we don't believe in shutting our eyes to the plain truth. Soldiers are people, not uniforms. They like cheers and handshaking, but what they like best is work where they can be assured of a fairly decent living and to be able to hold their heads up among their fellows.

In this connection we would like to call our readers' attention to the following editorial that appeared in one of the New York papers recently:

### **Protecting the Soldier.**

We don't enjoy taking advice, lots of us don't, and to be pointed to an example we might follow but won't is even more annoying. Australia has just done something that will appeal. Learn from Melbourne that Minister of Defence Wise announces that under the Defense Act employers refusing to reinstate returned soldiers are liable to a fine of twenty-five hundred dollars. The Minister added that the court could order the fine paid to an employee not reinstated. Only thing we can criticize about this is that it doesn't appear to be mandatory. When soldiers are needed to march away to war they are promised everything imaginable, but when danger is supposed to be past and "the boys come home" it's a different story.

### **An Interesting Matter.**

"When you find what your ideas are go to them and do your best to obtain them." This was the message deliv-

ered by Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, junior, recently to the several thousand soldiers, sailors, and marines at the regular Sunday afternoon entertainment for men in service at the Manhattan Opera House.

"The war is over," he said, "and let me advise every one of you men not to let the hero business get stale and threadbare before you get something to do. I saw a motto the other day on a Fifth Avenue sign, 'That they shall not have died in vain,' which I think should be taken to heart by all men who have been in the service and by their friends and relatives and the friends and relatives of those who suffered on the battlefields over there to make the world better.

"I feel sure that you men want to put manliness and honor into the world instead of seeing what you can get out of it without any effort on your part.

"The armies are being disbanded, and it is up to the real American to get into the game and take an active part in the affairs of everyday life. Let the Democrats take an active interest in Democratic ideals and politics, and let the Republicans take an interest in their ideals and politics."

Lieutenant Colonel Roosevelt has also announced plans for an association of officers and enlisted men who served in the war. The purpose of such an association will be to keep alive the spirit of the American soldiers, and every man who served during the war will be taken into partnership. The editor would like to hear from the readers of *THE THRILL BOOK* concerning such an association. Brief letters will be printed.

### **The Case of Hickey.**

On November 8, 1917, James Hickey, twenty years old, a waif, knowing neither father nor mother nor birthplace, but being a citizen of the United States, entered the United States Army.

If the world owed this pathetic figure any kindness, friendship, or sympathy, that debt has never been recognized. He got more than his share of the kicks and cuffs that frequently come to the homeless orphan from every side, and in this case the worst of it seems to have come from the officers of the army which he joined. His military record is evidence of his hopeless lot, no part of which was worse than that spent in the so-called military service of his country. His military history begins with his blank allotment card, stating that he had no kith or kindred. It ends with the record of his trial by court-martial. This record reveals the tragedy of the existence of this human waif and induces one to wonder why life ever should have been given to a human soul, only to be left undeveloped, bruised, and starved. The story is told in General Court-Martial Record No. 126401 and runs like this:

James Hickey, drafted November 8, 1917, had been but a few weeks in the service when he committed the unpardonable military crime of absence without leave for two hours at Fort Omaha, Nebraska. As a result of that initial offense he was imprisoned in the guard-house, where he remained for thirteen months. Knowing nothing of the length of his sentence or the cause for it, having been told by an officer in authority that he would probably remain imprisoned for ten years more, and having been advised by another officer that he had better get out the first opportunity, he broke out of prison and got away on last Christmas night.

Apprehended on January 9th, this twenty-year-old boy with the mind of a child was then promptly tried for desertion, to which he pleaded guilty. The prosecution called two witnesses to prove the case, and these in essential details corroborated the story the accused soldier told on oath. The seven-page, loosely written record of the trial

of this boy, "defended" by a frightened chaplain, concludes with the testimony of the boy himself, which reveals a figure so pathetic and sad as to cause the soul of men, excepting military men, to cry out in anguish for him who from his birth had had no chance in life, had never known an act of kindness or heard a word of sympathy, and who had never known the protection of a father or the loving care of a mother, who, indeed, had never known his parents' names.

Thereupon the court went into secret session, and sentenced this boy who had had no chance whatever in life, either in or out of the army, "to be dishonorably discharged from the service, to forfeit all pay and allowances due or to become due, and to be confined at hard labor at such place as the reviewing authority may direct for eighteen months." The sentence was approved, and was doubtless regarded in military circles as very lenient. The trial consumed forty minutes; the finding "vindicated the law and established discipline in the army."

And this trial took place and the boy was convicted notwithstanding the fact that a board of medical officers four months before had pronounced that this boy had only the mind of a child of seven years rather than that of a man responsible for his misconduct.

### Real Stuff.

The following standing orders of the Twenty-seventh Division, called "Stick to Death Orders," should be read by every one. They are an example of the spirit displayed by our men "over there" all through the war.

1. This position will be held, and the section will remain here until relieved.
2. The enemy cannot be allowed to interfere with this program.
3. If the gun team cannot remain here alive, it will remain here dead; but, in any case, it will remain here.

4. Should any-man, through shell shock or other cause, attempt to surrender, he will remain here—dead.

5. Should the gun be put out of action, the team will use rifles, revolvers, Mills grenades, and other novelties.

6. Finally, the position, as stated, will be held.

### Read This Carefully.

#### TO THE EDITOR OR BUSINESS MANAGER:

The great difficulty encountered by the government in reeducating disabled soldiers and sailors is to get information of the opportunity to them. There is an astonishing number of these men out in civil life badly handicapped by their injuries, but endeavoring, nevertheless, to work. It is most amazing the ignorance of the average man and woman about what the government stands ready to do and is doing for these men.

This Board is endeavoring to spread this information as widely as possible in the hope of alleviating the miserable condition of some of these disabled soldiers, and I am asking you if you will not print the inclosed, or as much as you can find space for, in any way which seems to you likely to attract attention? It is a little piece of patriotic service, whose object is most laudable.

I know that you have been deluged with a great deal of propaganda matter from Washington, but happily to this charge we can plead "not guilty," as this is the first request we have made of you, and we do it not on behalf of ourselves, but of these disabled soldiers who have reached their present desperate condition defending you and your business. I greatly hope that you will assist us to the extent of helping give circulation to this information.

Very sincerely yours,

CHARLES H. WINSLOW,  
Chief, Division of Research.

### Every Disabled Soldier and Sailor Should Know

That the government is resolved to do its best to restore him to health, strength, and self-supporting activity.

That until his discharge from hospital care the medical and surgical treatment necessary to restore him to health and strength is under the jurisdiction of the military or naval authorities.

That the vocational training which may be afterwards necessary to restore his self-supporting activity is under the jurisdiction of the Federal Board for Vocational Education.

That if he needs an artificial limb or other orthopedic or mechanical appliance the Bureau of War Risk Insurance supplies it free upon his discharge and renews it when considered necessary.

That if, after his discharge, he again needs medical treatment on account of his disability the Bureau of War Risk Insurance supplies it free.

That any man whose disability entitles him to compensation under the War Risk Insurance Act may be provided by the Federal Board with a course of vocational training for a new occupation.

That the government strongly recommends each man who needs it to undertake vocational training and put himself under the care of the Federal Board, but the decision to do so is optional with each man.

That if his disability does prevent him from returning to employment without training and he elects to follow a course of vocational training provided by the Federal Board, the course will be furnished free of cost, and he will also be paid as long as the training lasts a monthly compensation equal to the sum to which he is entitled under the War Risk Insurance Act or a sum equal to the pay of his last month of

active service, whichever is the greater, but in no case will a single man or a man required by his course of instruction to live apart from his dependents receive less than sixty-five dollars per month, exclusive of the sum paid dependents; nor will a man living with his dependents receive less than seventy-five dollars per month, inclusive of sum paid to dependents.

That if his disability does not prevent him from returning to employment without training and he elects to follow a course of vocational training provided by the Federal Board, the course will be furnished free of cost to him, and the compensation provided by the War Risk Insurance Act will be paid to him, but no allowance will be paid to his family.

That, in addition to the above, the family or dependents of each disabled man will receive from the government during his period of training the same monthly allotment and allowance as that paid prior to his discharge from the army or the navy.

That upon completion of his course of training he will continue to receive the compensation prescribed by the War Risk Insurance Act so long as his disability continues.

That in nearly every case, by following the advice and suggestions of the Federal Board, he can either get rid of the handicap caused by his disability or acquire new powers to replace any that may have been lost.

That if he is willing to learn and to take advantage of the opportunities to increase his skill offered him by the Federal Board he can usually get a better position than he had before entering the service.

That if he fails to take advantage of these opportunities he will find himself badly handicapped when he is obliged to compete with the able-bodied men who come back to work after the war.

That the Federal Board, through its vocational experts, will study his particular disability and advise him as to the proper course to pursue and give him free training for the occupation best suited to him.

That on the satisfactory completion of his training the Federal Board, through its employment service, will assist him to secure a position.

That public authorities and other large employers will, in many cases at least, give the disabled soldiers and sailors preference when filling vacant positions, provided they possess the training necessary to fill them.

All disabled soldiers, whether in or out of the hospital, should address their communications either to the Federal Board for Vocational Education, Washington, D. C., or to the district office of the Federal Board of the district in which he is located. The district offices of the Board are located at the following points respectively:

District No. 1—Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Office: Room 433, Tremont Building, Boston, Mass.

District No. 2—Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey. Office: Room 711, 280 Broadway, New York.

District No. 3—Pennsylvania and Delaware. Office: 1000 Penn Square Building, Philadelphia, Pa.

District No. 4—District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. Office: 606 F Street NW., Washington, D. C.

District No. 5—North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Tennessee. Office: Room 1404 Candler Building, Atlanta, Ga.

District No. 6—Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Office: 822 Maison Blanche Annex, New Orleans, La.

District No. 7—Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky. Office: 906 Mercantile Library Building, Cincinnati, Ohio.

District No. 8—Michigan, Illinois,



and Wisconsin. Office: 1600 the Westminster, 110 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

District No. 9—Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri. Office: 517 Chemical Building, St. Louis, Mo.

District No. 10—Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Office: Room 742 Metropolitan Bank Building, Minneapolis, Minn.

District No. 11—Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah. Office: 909 Seventeenth Street, Denver, Colo.

District No. 12—California, Nevada, and Arizona. Office: 997 Monadnock Building, San Francisco, Calif.

District No. 13—Montana, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Office: Room 539 Central Building, Seattle, Wash.

District No. 14—Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Office: 810 Western Indemnity Building, 1000 Main Street, Dallas, Texas.

### Questions and Answers.

Question.—Information on the following subject would be appreciated: How is present government insurance transferred to old-line insurance? How much of the time the insurance is carried at present rates will apply on an endowment policy? Any information as to where one can get dope on this subject will be appreciated. Like your book, but hope you get some real thrill stories like "Wolf of the Steppes."—B. D. B.

Answer.—Your best policy is to write directly to the Bureau of War Risk Insurance (Information Section), Washington, D. C., for complete information, as your question covers a fairly broad field. We are glad that you like *THE THRILL BOOK*, and hope that you will become a regular reader.

Question.—Saw your first book through a friend of mine, and am asking for some advice. I was discharged

about a month ago after returning from a year's service overseas. My old position in New York was filled, so it was me for a new job. I finally landed one down here at my trade—a machinist. Now my wife says she won't come down to a "hick village" like this to live, and if I don't get a job in or near New York she's through with me. I know this isn't exactly in your line, but sometimes it helps to get another person's view. What I want to do is to get a job up North, but if I can't how can I get my wife to look at it the right way? I spent most of my time on the other side looking forward to getting back to home and my wife. I'm rather up a tree, and would appreciate any advice you could give me. Will watch your magazine for an answer.—J. B. H., Ex-Sergeant of Infantry.

Answer.—There is only one answer. If your wife is not willing to stand by you when you need her help, this is a sure sign that she cares very little for you. My advice is to stick to your position, make good, and if by that time she still remains away you can be confident that she does not want to do her part. I would suggest, in the meanwhile, that you write her at length and lay the case before her fairly and squarely. Give her a chance. Often these things are straightened out amicably for both sides by a little intelligent consideration.

**M**ANY questions are asked about wound stripes. Here are some leading ones:

If a man is wounded twice by separate bullets at the same time, does he get one stripe or two?

What about the man hit in many places by fragments of the same shell?

If he is hit once, then starts back and is hit again, is it one wound or two?

If a leg and arm are shot off simultaneously, what about it?

These questions were taken to the War Department at Washington to a clerk there who specializes in wound stripes.

The clerk looked over the list. "That is all covered," he said, "in General Order 53," and pointed to the following:

"A gold chevron of pattern identical with that of the war-service chevron, to be worn on the lower half of the right sleeve of all uniform coats, except fatigue coats, by each officer, field clerk, and enlisted man who has received, or who may hereafter receive, a wound in action with the enemy, or as the result of an act of the enemy, which necessitates treatment by a medical officer, and an additional chevron for each additional wound; but not more than one chevron will be worn for two or more wounds received at the same time. Disablement by gas necessitating treatment by a medical officer shall be considered to be a wound within the meaning of this order."

"All those questions have come up," said the clerk, "and the answer is as the order shows that no matter how many wounds are received at the same time the man gets only one chevron. If a soldier were wounded and started back and was wounded later he would be entitled to two wound chevrons. The many questions that have arisen have required official interpretation of other parts of the order. For example, the medical officer must be an officer of the army—to keep the records clear—and this issue was settled by the claims of soldiers of a merchant ship, that they were wounded in a submarine attack. There was no army medical officer on board; their wounds were not serious enough to require attention after the ship reached port, so that no connection was established with the Medical Department of the army. Their claims had to be denied."

The wound chevron is naturally the

most prized in the army. There are soldiers in the United States army who were wounded during the Spanish-American war. They began to put in applications soon after the order was issued on the ground of a wound received more than twenty years ago. It was ruled that the order was retroactive, and the veterans of the Spanish-American war received the coveted chevrons. Then the question came up as to the Civil War, and this, of course, was decided affirmatively by the ruling on the later war. Those affected are retired army officers. They may wear wound chevrons for the Civil War wounds on some occasions, limited in number.

Some are seen on the streets now with wound chevrons and other chevrons sewed on civilian clothing. This is against the regulations and is covered in the following memorandum from the Adjutant General, P. C. Harris:

"These chevrons—meaning all—are for wear on the army uniform only and should not be worn on civilian clothing. Neither gold, blue, nor silver chevrons will be issued to men after their discharge from the army, but the War Department has no objection to honorably discharged officers or enlisted men, who rendered the necessary service, purchasing service chevrons from private firms, provided they wear them only on their uniform, when that uniform may be worn, and provided also that they make application to the adjutant general of the army, stating service rendered, so that the same may be verified and the right of the applicant to wear the chevrons verified."

No steps have been taken against those who have chevrons on civilian clothes, the practice thus far simply being discouraged, but there is authority and if the custom spreads this authority may be invoked.

THE EDITOR.



**T**HE enlarging of THE THRILL BOOK comes on the date that opens a new era in the United States. We might call the next period the "Sahara Period," and if ever people needed thrills they will need them now. THE THRILL BOOK will have to take the place of the mythical cocktail and the forgotten glass of foaming beer. It comes to you with the inauguration of an experiment in America which all of us will watch with extreme interest. The subject of prohibition has long been discussed; now it is upon us with full force. Whether it will prove a success or a failure remains to be seen. Human nature is naturally optimistic, we think, and it reacts swiftly to the many influences with which it comes in contact. The American spirit is fine, even awe-inspiring, equal to any emergency. It has consented to this in its open-hearted way. Let us hope that the latest change in the Constitution is one that will be

of value. At any rate, we have the sly feeling that THE THRILL BOOK will become more necessary than ever. We have been told that it was a kind of oasis in the desert of modern magazines. Now is its chance. 'Atta boy!

"Among those present," as they say in the paper, in this issue is Tod Robbins, a writer who possesses the rare faculty of making fantasy and imagination real and vital. Oscar Wilde remarked in one of his inimitable essays that "Art itself is really a form of exaggeration; and selection, which is the very spirit of art, is nothing more than an intensified mode of overemphasis." We agree with this, and we think that as an artist of prose Tod Robbins is without an equal among the younger school of writers. Read "The Bibulous Baby," and if you don't think that it is the most astounding and clever bit of fiction that you have ever run across we lose our one best bet so far. We

are frank enough to admit that the bizarre, the fantastic, the unusual, the adventurous, appeal to us strongly. It was this that caused us to open fire with *THE THRILL BOOK*. Carrying the thought a bit further, we might add that such stories as "The Bibulous Baby" are hard to find. Even for a magazine that has already published extraordinary and out-of-the-rut fiction this little tale stands out sharply. It is a gem of its kind. It contains that ironic humor that has made H. C. Bunner dear to all our hearts; that flavor that runs through Eugene Field, Mark Twain, and the best of O. Henry. In this connection we confess that we consider the above-named writers purely American in their refreshing geniality and lack of imitation. What cheers us considerably is the fact that Tod Robbins is a hard worker. He takes his pen seriously. He doesn't waste his time doing "space fillers" or following the trend of many "*fictioneers*" who have made *THE THRILL BOOK* popular by its very contrast to their humdrum material. We are lucky enough to have a few more of these short bits by Robbins, and also a few months hence we will start a serial by him that certainly has no parallel to-day.

With this issue of *THE THRILL BOOK* we lay before you the work of some of the best writers of fiction. The name of H. Bedford-Jones carries with it a large following of devoted readers, and it makes us feel especially happy to announce the fact that we have secured what is without doubt the best serial he has ever written—"The Opium Ship"—beginning in this number. One becomes breathless following the adventures of Sir Gerald Desmond, gentleman and soldier of fortune. It isn't so much that he is continually running into danger, but what holds us is the way he gets out of it. We can recommend the coming installments to you

with a safe conscience. During the entire history of *THE THRILL BOOK* we do not recall ever having run across a cleaner, more straightforward, and adventurous tale than this. It comes right up to the standard which we intend to follow now and always.

We can promise you more stories by H. Bedford-Jones. Write to us and tell us what you think of this serial.

Among our discoveries in fiction we rate Clarence L. Andrews very highly. His first story came to us January 14th, and we made him an offer almost at once. It was called "Profit by Loss," and appeared in our April 15th issue. Our readers have written to us, telling us how much they like it. To them the novelette, "Vanishing Gold," in this number, will come as a welcome surprise. Here is a writer with a golden future. He knows how to tell a story, and he has the patience of a genius. All the work that comes from his pen is of the highest craftsmanship, possessing human interest, and always one finds a corking plot that holds one fascinated from the first line to the last. The success of an author like Andrews is one of the pleasures that come to an editor after he has tackled huge piles of ominous-looking manuscripts without losing hope that among them somewhere is the kind of material he knows will win favor. We have other stories by Andrews, and we warn you that if you miss any of them you will regret it.

Among the stories in this issue that have appealed to us strongly we mention "The Conqueror," by Robert W. Sneddon, a well-known and brilliant writer; "The Tenth Crisis," by L. J. Beeston, an English author whose knowledge of the short story is only exceeded by his understanding of human nature, and last of all J. U. Giesy's "The Seventh Glass," a bit of fiction

that contains a very unique situation and a whirlwind surprise at the end.

### From Our Readers.

Here is a letter that conveys sincerity in every line.

DEAR EDITOR.—Have just finished reading your THRILL BOOK of this date, and, to express my honest opinion of it, I would say it is *great*. I like the stories "The Jeweled Ibis" and "The Shadows of Race," and would like to see more like them. They were simply wonderful.

I also liked "A Hooting, Tooting Son-of-a-gun." I am from the West, and like to read Western stories.

Wishing you good luck and waiting anxiously for the next THRILL BOOK, I am yours very truly,

C. C. WADE.

We are always glad to hear from men in the service or out of it. Here is a real letter.

DEAR SIR: Congrats! You've certainly filled a long-felt want when you brought THE THRILL BOOK before the public! I found the first two numbers on a stand here in Camp Taylor this morning, and, instinctively scenting something novel, I purchased them. Besides being curious as to their contents, I had noted the Street & Smith imprint, and that was sufficient guarantee that this new magazine was up to the mark.

Carefully I perused the editorials on the back covers. Then, on getting to barracks, I went at the stories themselves, to see if they were what the editor claimed them. *Well!* Not only did they justify all his claims, they surprised me as well, for they turned out to be even better than I'd expected. For unusual stories they've pretty nearly everything beat, and, having read magazines for many years, I stand in a position to know.

The first I tackled was "Wolf of the Steppes." It looked odd, but the first paragraphs caught my interest, and the subsequent events described held me until the last line. It's as weird as any I've read so far.

"Ivory Hunters" is unusual, but up to Carey's standard. I know that author's work; in this latest he nearly outdid himself.

J. C. Kofoed handled splendidly his characters in "The Jeweled Ibis." Here we've a tale of unsurpassed mystery as well as adventure. Give your readers more of this type; you'll find they enjoy them immensely. "In the Shadows of Race," by J. H. Bishop, you've given another highly entertaining yarn. So far I've read both parts and have had my appetite whetted for the rest of it. I suppose it will run to four or five parts? "A Hooting, Tooting Son-of-a-gun" is good. Put across more of Smiley's stuff. This story is a hummer. "The Web of Death" and "The Man Who Met Himself" are both fine. And so there you have a brief review of about all of them and can see that they've pleased me.

As soon as I'm discharged, which I expect will be within a week from today, I'll show the first two numbers to my friends and relatives, and I know of at least a dozen subscriptions you will receive as a result.

I am inclosing the addresses of several of my comrades who were at my side at the front in France. I'd suggest your sending them each a sample copy of THE THRILL BOOK.

I'm a willing and ready-to-help friend.

Sincerely yours,

PRIVATE WILLIAM RAND LOESCHER,  
335th Field Artillery Casuals,  
Camp Zachary Taylor,  
Louisville, Ky.

# Around the World

## Yank's Return Is Like Enoch Arden's.

Wearing two gold service stripes on his uniform, a large, middle-aged man walked into the San Angelo, Texas, post office a short time ago and point-blank asked the janitor if Williamson was his name.

"It is," replied John M. Williamson, fifty-three years old and stooped with the cares of a large family. "What's yours?"

"Dooley is my name," was the quiet reply.

Thus met two men, who, the returned soldier charges, are married to the same woman. Williamson says his wife was deserted at Cleburne more than ten years ago and had a divorce. She was washing clothes to support herself and three small children when he became the head of the family in 1914.

Dooley tells a thrilling tale. He and his wife, who had been married once before and had a son, and their three children lived in Cleburne in 1909. Hoping to obtain work in the railroad shops at Temple, Dooley went there. He says he met a stranger who told of riches that awaited in Mexico and agreed to accompany his new-found friend. The farewell note he wrote to his wife was the last Mrs. Dooley ever heard from her husband until he appeared here recently.

Hardly had he left the Rio Grande behind when he was arrested, for what, Dooley says, he does not know. His captors were Mexicans, a band of rough men. He was confined in an underground dungeon and there for seven years his life wasted away. He was given wholesome food three times a day, but the only light of ray that he knew filtered through bars that were far beyond his reach and Dooley obtained his only exercise by tramping his cell. His beard grew down to his waist and his clothes rotted in the foul atmosphere and fell from his body.

Freedom finally came by means of a dumb-waiter on which food each day was lowered to the prisoner. One day meals

were not forthcoming and Dooley jerked down the rickety platform and pulled himself to the top. The entrance to what then appeared to be an old mine was unguarded and Dooley started on foot across the barren country. He was picked up by Federal cavalymen who escorted him to the border. Having no passport, Dooley swam the river and reached El Paso. Search for his wife proved unavailing and the blacksmith, then forty-two years of age, joined the army.

He went to France, fought gallantly in many battles and returned to the States in January. The following month he was discharged at San Antonio. Through an uncle in Oklahoma he learned that a stepson was at Lampasas. The young man directed him to San Angelo, telling Dooley that his mother had married a man named Williamson. It was in this way that Dooley located his family.

Ima, his oldest girl, was only five years old when her father left. She greeted him a young woman of fifteen. Maggie, who had been only seven months old, appeared a girl of eleven. Ura, the middle sister, is thirteen.

But Dooley found his wife hardened against him on account of what she believes was desertion on his part. Then, too, he beheld two children—Woodrow May, a girl, named for President Wilson, and John J. Pershing Williamson, a baby boy, aged three months, who were born after Mrs. Dooley's marriage to the post-office janitor, and Dooley gave up all hopes of ever being reunited with the woman.

But the man who for years was a prisoner of Mexican bandits and who later strafed the Huns in France wants his three children, whom he intends to educate. He has obtained these, while Mrs. Williamson has gone to Belton to live with a sister. She took with her Woodrow May and Johnny Pershing, but Williamson went after them. What the so-

lution of the problem in the eternal triangle will be is unknown.

#### **Toss of Coin Settles Fate of Vessel.**

Toss of a coin settled the fate of the old three-masted steamer "Arcata," which for years has laid on the mud flats of Alameda, Cal. Dave Crowley is the new owner of the "Arcata" and as two attempts to make her seaworthy have failed, he will tear her to pieces and salvage the machinery, winches, rudder, and other parts which are in good condition. Crowley expects to realize four thousand dollars on the old hulk.

How Crowley acquired the "Arcata" is the subject of much gossip on the floor of the marine department of the Chamber of Commerce. It appears that during a discussion with James Smith, the "Arcata's" former owner, as to what he intended to do with the ancient vessel, Crowley offered to toss a coin for the ship.

"All right," said Smith, "I'll toss with you to see whether you give me fifteen hundred dollars or I give you the Arcata."

"Done," promptly answered Crowley. Tom Crowley, his brother, flipped a coin and Smith shouted "heads." As it came down it was found that "tails" won. Smith grinned and shook hands with Crowley and the bargain was sealed.

The old "Arcata" figured in the shipping of the Pacific Coast for many years in the old days.

#### **Dog Saves Master from Bull.**

Joe Orberg, of Manor, Texas, night watchman and official dog catcher, had a narrow escape from losing his life a short time ago after roping a big bull, as first proceeding to landing the vicious animal in the town's cattle pound. Orberg, who weighs two hundred and fifty pounds, had started leading the bull toward the pen, when the beast suddenly gave a loud snort, accompanied by a wild leap that sent the marshal sprawling upon the ground. Luckily Orberg had his dog, Brownie, with him, and the dog saved his life.

When the bull observed the marshal

lying on the ground, which it did before Orberg could regain his feet, it immediately charged and was about to gore the fallen man with its horns when the dog made a long leap and caught the bull by the nose and with a quick side movement threw the animal upon its side. Getting a good hold on the bull's throat, the dog would have killed it had not Orberg interfered and wrenched Brownie away from the bellowing beast.

After this the bull was very docile and kept its eyes constantly upon the dog as it was led to the pound. Orberg is now prouder than ever of Brownie and says he wouldn't take a thousand dollars for him.

#### **Baby Eats Four Pounds of Buckshot.**

Mrs. Bertha Noting, of Ennis, Texas, is no physician or surgeon. In fact, she is so tender-hearted that she could not attend the bedside of any person who might have been operated on. She hasn't the slightest knowledge of surgery, even in the most elementary stage, but this week she performed an operation—a major operation—which caused the leading surgeons of the city to sit up and listen.

More than that she performed the operation on her two-year-old daughter, Martha Marie. It was a matter of life or death with Martha Marie and Mrs. Noting could not secure the services of a surgeon promptly. Hence she took the matter in hand herself.

While Mrs. Noting was attending to the household duties little Martha Marie got possession of a four-pound sack of buckshot bullets about the size of a candy lemon drop. She liked the looks of the "blue candy" and began swallowing them right off. Before Mrs. Noting knew what had happened little Martha Marie had devoured the four pounds of shot.

She did not appear troubled, but when Mrs. Noting picked her up to rock her to sleep she noticed the child's weight had increased perceptibly. Pretty soon Martha Marie had a pain—several of them—in her "tummy." She began to cry and then told her mother about swallowing all the blue candy in the bag. She showed her mother the empty bag and rubbed her stomach.

Right then Mrs. Noting decided something must be done and done at once. She phoned several physicians. But they were busy with flu patients and couldn't come. Mrs. Noting then hit upon a plan. She would operate on the little girl herself. And she did.

Did Mrs. Noting slice her little daughter open with a cruel knife and take the bullets out? Oh, no!

She just took little Martha Marie by the heels and gave her a few shakes—good hard shakes—and the buckshot came rolling out on the floor. She repeated the operation and finally "shook all the shot out of the baby."

Physicians declare they had never thought of performing such an operation, but that it was simple and effective enough—incidentally it saved the mother a fee of fifty bones.

Martha Marie went right on and took her nap. She never felt the slightest effects of the operation.

#### **Wolf Killed in City.**

Hiram Lawrence killed a wolf near his home within the city limits of Grand Rapids, Wis. The animal had been seen several times, but was thought to be a dog. More wolves are reported in the neighborhood and an organized hunt may be held.

#### **Speedy Justice.**

Three hours after he had held up the cashier of a grocery in Philadelphia, Pa., and robbed him of one thousand dollars, Frank Moran, a flashily dressed young man from Connecticut, was on his way to the penitentiary under a ten-year sentence. Moran commandeered a motor truck to escape, but was captured after a chase lasting half an hour.

#### **Build Public Works.**

Public works of all kinds that will give employment to men demobilized from the army and from the war industries should be put under way at once as a reconstruction measure, according to Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson, who, in a statement outlining his views on this subject, points out that not only will the transition from war-time conditions to a peace

basis be facilitated thereby, but that a work of great permanent value to the nation will be accomplished.

States, cities, towns, in fact all governmental divisions, ought now, he believes, to make up for the reduced construction due to the war. The government's obligation to provide employment for the returning soldiers and the necessity for many forms of improvement in municipal and State equipment render such a program essential at this time, he holds.

The secretary's statement follows:

"I am of the opinion that from the time we restore ourselves to our normal postwar activities, the demand for peacetime production will be so great that there will not be the remotest possibility of securing any reduction in the wage rates from their present basis. I feel further, that the manufacturer who fails to take into consideration the prospects of the future and who, in a hope of securing a cheaper labor or cheaper raw material, does not build up his organization and maintain it during the possibly brief period of readjustment, will be handicapped in securing his share of the business afterward; because he will be handicapped through lack of working forces in his factory.

"It therefore seems to me that the situation resolves itself into taking care of the possible problem in the interim between our ceasing war activities and the time when we have assumed our natural postwar activities."

#### **He Got Baby's Picture.**

Although he had never seen his baby, born after his departure for France, Lieutenant Ralph S. Bush, of Junction City, Kan., received a picture of the little one just before he was killed in action, according to a letter to Mrs. Bush from a brother officer, Lieutenant James C. Bodin.

"Ralph had just received the photos of the baby and he showed them to all of us," writes Lieutenant Bodin. "At noon, on August 9th, on a long march toward Fismes, we received orders to move over across the railroad and river and attack the woods that run parallel with another



railroad north of it, but west of Fismes. When all were across the Germans threw an artillery barrage on us and around us. We kept moving to make less casualties. We had a few and Lieutenant Bush was among them. He was hit with a piece of shrapnel and killed instantly. He was ahead of his men, leading them on and through."

#### **The Great Possibilities in Tungsten.**

Australia is second in importance among British territories producing tungsten ores. In Queensland many of the principal mines have quite recently been acquired by one of the largest of the concerns which have established tungsten reduction plants in Great Britain since the war, and the event appears to promise a new era of progress for this branch of mining in Queensland. Wolfram is mined in New South Wales and Victoria, while important quantities of scheelite, another ore of tungsten, are obtained in New Zealand and in Tasmania.

Wolfram is also obtained as a by-product of the Cornish tin industry and has received special attention during the last four years. Canada has become a producer chiefly of scheelite, mined in Halifax County, Nova Scotia, and deposits are also known in Rhodesia.

It is difficult to foresee the future of tungsten, but it is worth while to examine the considerations which would lead one to form an opinion. It would be optimistic to expect a continuance of the eager demand and handsome prices realized at times during the last four years. If a general commercial depression and a fall in the world's demand for steel were to take place tungsten would suffer, as would many other commodities. On the other hand, activity in the world's steel trade should support the position of tungsten. Its popularity among steel makers as a steel hardener would seem to be established for the present. The possibility may also be borne in mind that the results of scientific research, which has been continuously conducted during the war, may lead to new uses for the metal. Tungsten proved to be a dominating factor in military power as soon as

it was recognized that modern war must be waged with shells by the million and with guns by thousands. Its individual power in times of peace may prove equally great.

#### **War Machine-making Tools for Education.**

Machines that until a few months ago were busily engaged in grinding out weapons of destruction soon are to be used to foster the genius of potential young American inventors. Practically all of the government's war machine-making tools, nearly one hundred million dollars' worth of which now are in storage at Washington, will be turned over to the nation's vocational training schools if Congress acts favorably on a bill now pending before it.

Under the provisions of this measure, which was introduced into the lower house of Congress by Representative Caldwell of New York, it is proposed to permit universities, colleges, and other institutions now using antiquated or worn-out equipment, to select the newest machines from the stocks now idle at Washington. The material will be loaned to the educational institutions, officially, but unofficially it is agreed that they will not be withdrawn from their new peacetime uses unless an unexpected demand should be made upon the nation's arsenals and munition factories.

In a letter to a Washington official familiar with the new project, Doctor David Snedden, president of the national society of vocational education, gave his unqualified approval to the plan, but asked for more information as to the provisions for distributing the machinery. He said that while none of the colleges and universities that had given of their time and equipment for the training of soldiers during the war expected to have such equipment replaced, it would be a welcome assistance from the government.

One of the greatest benefits of the new plan, it was explained by vocational school teachers who are supporting it, is that it would permit the entire nation to reap big profits from the use of these machines.



## “Ferd, They are Playing Your Song!”

Imagine the thrill these words gave Mr. Ferdinand Hohnhorst, of Covington, Ky., as he stood on a crowded street, watching the great Peace Parade, when Meyer's Military Band came swinging along playing his song, “Uncle Sam, the Peaceful Fighting Man.” But let him tell his story in his own words:—

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“My song also has made a decided hit among school children, and has been introduced into several of the Cincinnati Schools. Thanking you most kindly for the services you have rendered me, I remain, Yours very truly,

(Signed) Ferdinand Hohnhorst.”



Leo Friedman

**Leo Friedman, Our Composer** whom Mr. Hohnhorst speaks so enthusiastically about, is one of America's most gifted composers and the author of many great song hits. Among his great successes are “Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland,” the sales of which reached the enormous total of more than two million copies. Others that reached into the million class were “Let Me Call You Sweetheart” and “When I Dream of Old Erie.” Mr. Friedman writes music to words, that cause them to fairly throb with feeling and musical charm. He has been styled “America's Favorite Composer,” and properly so, for his melodies have reached the hearts of millions of the American people, and made them sing.

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